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THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE

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THE LOVELY SHIP

THE VOYAGE HOME

FAREWELL TO YOUTH

A RICHER DUST

THAT WAS YESTERDAY

WOMEN AGAINST MEN

IN THE SECOND YEAR

THE MIRROR IN DARKNESS

(*In Progress*)

1. COMPANY PARADE

2. LOVE IN WINTER

3. NONE TURN BACK

THE MOON IS MAKING

HERE COMES A CANDLE

Autobiography

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

Criticism

MODERN DRAMA IN EUROPE

CIVIL JOURNEY

Historical Essay

THE DECLINE OF MERRY ENGLAND

The Captain's Wife

by Storm Jameson

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For

TONI STOLPER

with love and respect

THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE

Chapter 1

The young woman sat up in bed, like one raised from drowning. In the darkness she saw, dimly, the bedclothes, wrinkled, receding from her knees in thin waves. She felt the weight of her body.

The time, she thought; what is the time?

Her hand, moving away from her, struck sharply the candlestick on the little table. She lit the candle. The flame spread and contracted, drawing into its circle the watch laid there. One o'clock. Only one o'clock, she repeated. Why am I awake?

And it seemed to her that she had not wakened of herself. Some obstacle had been reached by her sleeping self. In the colourless secret deserts it explored it had come on one of those landmarks of which the meaning is not understood at the time. It stands musing, and then—as though some cold from that stone had penetrated the sleeping hand laid on it—the shock flings it across the frontier of sleep.

She shivered lightly. She was seized by a sense of work to be done. The house, already neat and clean, must be cleaned again, from roof to passage. What?—now?

Yes, yes, now.

She got out of bed slowly, the child in her thin body pulling at it. The surface of the carpet was rough and cold under her feet. She stood still, feeling the room take its familiar shape round her, but not able to go to meet it,

because of the suspense of her body. It hung like a ship in the centre of the cyclone of this world. The walls of the house broke and were held together by the anatomy of the pear-tree nailed against them, and beyond them she saw the bank covered with coarse grass dropping steeply to the road, and behind the wall the glittering steel bones of the railway, and beyond it the harbour, placid sleeping water, mirroring darkness and a gull's feather, and the skeleton of the ship on the stocks, and the sea-wall, old, iron rings and grass thrust between its stones, and the ship-master's house, and the road climbing, slowly, grey flint, between stone fences, a long long way, to the moor, the soil black round the gnarled fingers of roots, the circles widening until the farthest coiled itself across the road-stead of the river Plate: and time, turning in her, whipped back, a cold snake, to its centre in her body.

But this is *the* hour of my life.

It was less a thought in words than a sense issuing with her light breath. As quickly gone.

She felt the draught flowing under the door to her feet, and the roughness of the carpet. She began energetically to dress. When she was clothed she went downstairs, lit the gas, looking first to see that the curtains were drawn across the blinds so that no ray of light would give her away to any passer-by in the night, and drew water from the boiler at the side of the stove. She went back with it upstairs.

Her house had four rooms. The small sitting-room and the kitchen behind it, and upstairs the bedroom where she slept and the still smaller bedroom at the back. A steep staircase springing behind a door led to the attic, boarded over, where she kept her boxes.

She began by scrubbing the boards in the attic. When she dragged at the boxes she had the curious idea that the

child was helping her, pushing with little movements of its hands behind the curtain of flesh. After the floor, she scrubbed the narrow wooden stairs, searching with her fingers into the corners where a little dust gathered. With the same insistent energy she swept the landing and the bedrooms: she polished the brass rail of her bed, and stared without a smile at the grotesque tiny reflection of her face: she rubbed until it gleamed the satiny wood of the wardrobe, and breathed on the glass and the brass handles before she polished them. There were two vases of red and white Bohemian glass and a marble statuette, of a naked woman, on the mantelpiece. She had rescued these from her mother-in-law's attic. Carrying them downstairs, in hands that trembled a little, she plunged them in tepid water and wiped each with the care she might have given a child.

When she was taking them upstairs she realised that she was exhausted. Her arms ached. A weight seemed fastened round her waist.

She would not give up the task she had needlessly begun. On her knees in the sitting-room, washing the painted skirting-board, she had to lean dizzily forward on her hands, her head dropping forward.

You should rest, she thought; and answered herself angrily, I'll rest when I finish my work.

The dizziness returned when she was dusting the great curving ends of the sofa, covered with black horsehair. Her hand slid over it. She pressed her face against it, shrinking from a roughened patch, and shuddered. But was it really herself who shuddered—or the child?

There was still the kitchen to be done, and the dark scullery, like a cupboard. With pain she knelt, stooped, lifted her arms, thrust them into the backs of drawers

she emptied of their contents, against the sides of the sink, along shelves. She was trembling, burning in the cold of this place.

Light came into the kitchen over the top of the blind. She walked slowly into the sitting-room and pulled the curtains, and jerked the blind. It flew up. Light came into this room from a wider circle, and with it, drawn behind its delicate hooves, came the harbour, the greedy impudent gulls, and the half-built ship. The young woman stretched her arms out to take them.

It was a morning in early April. The sky was a pure faint blue. A cloud like a white woollen shawl had been flung over its far edge. There were feathers of frost on the grass. They tipped the scales against the light coming from the sky, at the point where it met the arrows released against it by the harbour. The air was clear, glittering, fine.

After a minute the young woman's last strength failed her and she turned away and seated herself leaning over the table with her back to the shameless window. A thin notebook, with olive-green paper back, was lying on the table. She had been writing in it the evening before. Opening it to give her mind something to hold to, she glanced severely at the page.

		£	s.	d.
April 2	Peirson, linen	3.	10.	
	Eggs 6d Bread 5d			11.
	Butter 9d Soap 10d		1.	7.
	Potatoes 3d Collection 3d			6.
	Carpets shaking 1/6		1.	6.
" 4	Dr Herbert	3.	5.	
	Cab 1/- Wool 1/-		2.	
	Will's slippers 2/-		2.	

		£	s.	d.
April 4	Tea 9d Fish 3d		1.	
	Dressmaker 1/9		1.	9.
" 6	Gloves 1/2 Frilling 6d		1.	8.
	Curds 3d			3.
	Telegram 6d			6.
	Contribution to church	1.		
	Muff		3.	11.

She wearied before the end of the column, but her eye was held for an instant by the total—£11. 17. 2½. On the left-hand page she had written:

		£	s.	d.
April 7	Received up to this date	14.	8.	
	Disbursements	11.	17.	2½.
	Balance in hand	2.	10.	9½.

'You spend too much,' she said aloud—in a clear voice, arrogant, the voice of a girl, the contemplative bitterness of a woman.

Chapter 2

Towards midday a little girl ran into Mrs. Fisher's house and told her she was to come to Mrs. Russell's. She was wanted at once. Mrs. Fisher washed her hands at the sink, took off her apron and made a parcel of it with some other things, and walked as rapidly as her stoutness let her to the house in Rope Terrace. She found the young woman seated on the edge of her bed in a room which was as cold as charity, and smelled of soap and linseed. Everything that was needed for the birth was laid ready. Only the mother herself was unready, almost a girl, reluctant. She hid her fear in a hard civility. Under the white calico nightgown, decently frilled and starched, her body shuddered to the knees.

'I thowt it was for next week, honey.'

'Well you see it's for this,' Mrs. Russell said.

She watched the older woman turn her sleeves back as though for hard work, and shuddered again. Next, Mrs. Fisher bent to look in the coal-box: it was new; its black japanned sides and the flowers painted on the lid had never been sullied with coal.

'Am I to keep th' coals in this?' she demanded.

'Why should you keep coals anywhere?' the young woman said curtly. 'I don't need a fire. In April.'

'Th' bairn will need one.'

An expression of impatience crossed the young woman's face, but she answered,

'Very well. Do as you please.'

Fastening her apron, Mrs. Fisher said in a gentle voice, water coming slowly to the lip of a wooden pipe, thence spilling to the earth,

'You must get into th' bed, honey. You'll catch your death of cold.'

The young woman obeyed slowly. It was as though she knew that once she had covered herself in bed she ceased to be the mistress in her own house; another woman would light fires, pry into cupboards, and lay hands on the sacred cups, pans, dishcloths, to which certain rites and no others belonged. Perhaps because she had invented these rites for herself, after she married, and began to live a life unlike her life as the daughter of a rich woman, she had given them an obsessive importance. To dry a dishcloth otherwise than by hanging it over the back of the wooden chair in the scullery was not an error, it was sin. Listening to Mrs. Fisher's movements downstairs, she felt a gust of anger. It's your fault, she said to the child.

Outside, the day went past slowly. There were footsteps, voices, fragments torn from a living web and fluttering against the window. She followed each a short way, tugging at the thread that held her in her room, in her body, too narrow for another life pressing the husk of her own. Seen by her a gull held its great bright wings in the face of the sky, and she shared a thrill of joy with the child still obedient to her eyes. Unseen, the leaves of the pear nailed to the wall became flat and transparent in the light, a crocus bared itself under the tree like a child, clouds were moved up slowly in advance of a wind.

Three tides covered the mooring-posts in the harbour.

Three. Mrs. Russell's child was born the next evening at eight o'clock. She was pleased it was a girl. But she had

suffered so much—and she was not patient towards pain—not accepting it as women do—that she wanted only to be alone. Yet whenever Mrs. Fisher took the child from her she waited restlessly. Take care! She is mine! She felt safer when, rolled in a shawl, it was lying with her in the double bed—her child.

For the first two nights Mrs. Fisher stayed in the house. She sat heavily and patiently in the chair at the foot of the bed, her hands on her knees, the little eyes in her broad face turned sightlessly to the fire. A warm smell rose from her, a smell of earth from the mud dried on the hem of her skirt. Behind her eyes her mind turned over the images of life that serve very young children, colours, shapes, an eye-shaped knot in the floor, the smell of bread, curd, soured milk, the warmth of a skull under the hair. She was used to sitting for hours like this. Each house in the street sent for her when there was sickness or a birth—and she had children of her own. Eight.

The third night she went home, leaving the young woman in bed. Looking down at her she said,

'Now, you're all right, honey?'

'Yes, of course.' There was resentment in the voice.

'I'm bound to go home tonight. I'll be here in th' morning afore seven.'

'I shall be all right,' Mrs. Russell said drily.

'How old are you, my honey?'

'Twenty-six.'

She saw the young woman's immature body, fighting in its pains like a fish. 'Well, to think!' she said gently. 'I had three bairns at your age.'

The girl in the bed moved and uttered a profound sigh. 'I'm very glad I haven't.'

'Where's your husband now, honey?'

'On his voyage out.'

'A long voyage?'

'He's on his way to the Plate. Buenos Aires.' She pronounced the name so that Mrs. Fisher would understand it—*Bonnus Airs*. Even to her now it sounded more natural and pleasing that way.

She listened to Mrs. Fisher's feet moving heavily from stair to stair. The front door shut. Mrs. Fisher would lock it and take the key. The back door and the yard door were locked and bolted, but on the inside. She was safe, she was alone. The child beside her had not yet ceased to be part of her body.

She was not sleepy. A gale was blowing. She listened to the roar of invisible cataracts of wind.

Eight years. I have been married eight years. Mrs. Fisher had taken a candle with her to see down the stairs; the smell of the burnt wick floated back. She saw the lamp and the circle of light on the ceiling outside their room in the little French hotel. Humiliation, anger, the sharp bitter taste of the past between her teeth.

I had a handsome Russian coat that winter.

He lies and lies. There's no end to his lying tongue.

He began it before our marriage. He was lying when he told me he was taking a voyage off. Afterwards it came out he had written to the office and told them he was leaving his ship in Dieppe. They sacked him for it, and quite right.

What with that, and the bad year, he was months out of a ship. In the end he had to go as mate of a small steamer at £7. 10. a month.

I lived on my own backbone, she thought. She saw kippers lying on an enamel plate in the larder and herself laughing at William's mournful voice. Poverty, new to

her, hardened in her veins until she became stone to William Russell's discontent.

He wanted her to go again to her mother and ask for help.

'You ought to make it up,' he said in a grumbling voice.

She turned on him. 'Why?'

'Why, why?' he repeated, jeering at her. 'Why, because she's very well-off and we're poor. We've nothing, my girl. If she won't give you any money she could give me a job —a ship.'

'You know she told me you would never get another job with the firm after you left your ship that time,' she said with contempt. What contempt like a bitter plum in her mouth! In a girl's mouth.

He tried bullying her. 'Aren't you ashamed to speak of it?' he bawled.

'I? I? Why should I be ashamed?'

'Whose fault was it I had to stop in Dieppe?'

'Not mine,' she said loudly in a cold voice. 'Not mine, I can tell you. It would have been a great deal better for me if you had gone with your ship.'

'You asked me to marry you, didn't you?' he said, showing his teeth. They were yellow and discoloured behind the silk moustache. 'You were anxious enough to be married. You were going to help me, you said. Ha—a fine help you've been, girl.'

She said steadily, 'There's no helping those who can't learn.'

'Will you go and see your mother?' He began truculently—and changed his tone in mid-voice. He cajoled. 'Eh, my girl, she's getting on, an old woman, your mother. You s'd—'

'She's forty-four,' Sylvia Russell said shortly. 'Not a great deal older than you are.'

His blood tumbled to his face. With an effort he remembered that she was a young woman, not one of his officers whom he could bawl out in complete security. There is no going against the captain at sea: an officer not pliant enough can be punished by a word dropped easily in the owner's room—'not reliable—a sea-lawyer.'

'You s'd think of it she's your mother,' he said mildly, grieved. 'It's nothing but common kindness—'

'A lot you care for kindness,' she cried. 'What you want is for me to get money out of her for you. Well, I'll not. I'll starve first. I'll see you starve. Do you think I'll ask anyone—her or anyone—to help us? No! Do your own begging!'

It was astonishing that so harsh, so resonant a voice could come from her delicate body. It must be all voice, or her bones must give off sounds like strings. If she were his own age, thirty-seven. Thirty-seven to be put down by a girl of eighteen. He winced. He was like a whipped child—all the courage leaked out of him.

'Then you'll not go,' he said, with a last attempt at dignity.

'No. I will not.'

The cold unmitigated contempt for him in her voice settled him—for good, so far as concerned any appeal to her mother. He never had the hardihood to speak of it again.

She would not admit to herself that she was humiliated by her failure to help him in some splendid way. She was

honest—but not as touching herself. She began to defend herself against her honesty the day she bolted from her life of a young gentlewoman. 'You were right, you are right, you will always be right.' She blamed William for being what she had not known he was. She blamed her mother. If her mother had taken William into her shipping firm she would have been able to say to herself (and remind him), 'Look what I did for my husband by marrying him.' It would have softened her towards William himself. She would have minded his lies a great deal less. Her mother had not done it. Her mother was wrong, she was hard, she was mean—a mean woman. So that nothing should change this image of Mary Hervey in her daughter's mind, every offer of every other help she made must be turned down. A position for William in the firm or nothing. But it humiliated her that it was nothing.

And yet she knew he was not fit to go into a great shipping firm.

She was not softened towards him by knowing it. Many women love because they pity, but she was not such a one.

Her mind fretted itself against bars, an animal made cowardly by being shut up.

£7. 10. a month. It was less than she would have spent, before this, on the material for a frock. She could not endure poor cheap things. She would sooner go without.

From one voyage William brought her back, from Rouen, three pairs of very fine kid gloves. He watched her as she tried them on, working in each finger slowly, the thumb last.

'Do you like them?'

'Yes, indeed I do,' she said with warmth. 'They're beautiful. Beautiful.'

He grunted with pleasure. 'Ha, they cost me something.'

'Did they?' she said, a trifle drily.

'Yes, they did.' He gave a short laugh.

'If they cost more than you wanted to spend you'd better not have bought them,' she said.

She got up and went out of the room, leaving the gloves on the table. He passed from dismay to anger, and back to dismay. What did I say wrong? he thought, mortified. He went out of the house. When he returned, the gloves were lying thrown down anyhow on the top of his tin box, in the kitchen. He stuffed them hastily into his pocket—out of sight. Then he sat slumped, waiting for her to come. All the spirit had gone out of him. Yet he was so angry he could have thrashed her.

She came in and began to set the table for their supper. She neither looked at him nor said a word. They ate the meal in silence.

Suddenly—he could bear it no longer—he burst out, 'Don't you want them gloves then?'

'I don't want you to spend money buying things for me and then say you regret it,' she said coldly.

He was stunned. 'I never said anything of the sort.'

A delicate air of derision came on her face. Fortunately he was not looking at her.

'What did I say?'

'You said they cost you a great deal of money.' Words had been boiling in her during the silence. If he had not broken it, giving her the chance to speak, she would have gone on hating him until it became intolerable. Now in her relief she was almost sorry for him. He looked so dropped on.

'I didn't ask you to spend money,' she said more gently.

'I meant they were good ones,' he mumbled.

After a minute's silence she said in a gentle voice, 'Let me look at them, Will.'

He pulled them out of his pocket.

'There,' she cried, 'how you've creased them!'

Frowning, so that the fold came in the white space between her eyebrows, she smoothed them out finger by finger. Suddenly stopping, she looked at him and said quickly,

'I'm sorry, Will.'

'Oh, it's all right, it doesn't matter,' he said with a nervous laugh. He was as unable to meet her abrupt passionate repentances as her anger.

'I didn't mean it.'

'All right, it's all right.' He moved his hands, the skin wrinkled like worn leather.

She came over to him and sat on his knee. The smell of tar and tobacco on his skin and clothes did not disgust her when she was in one of her coaxing moods.

'Aren't 'a coming upstairs?' he said, after a minute.

Half reluctant, half smiling, she ran upstairs and he clumped after her.

He had not forgiven her completely, but there were other things he could not forgive in her, and he turned them over with his mind that was like the paw of a heavy animal, and turned and turned, in the weeks of a long voyage. He had an endless patience. He could skein day after day the same thought, covering it with such an accretion of threads that not even he knew truth from lies. Sometimes, when he was alone, a word or two spurted out, like drops struck from water. 'She thinks too much of herself' . . . 'She thinks she knows everything' . . . 'She

comes her mother over me.' It was always 'she.' And he did not know he was speaking.

After two voyages as mate, he got a ship. As master, he drew eighteen pounds, and if she went a voyage with him they saved money. The custom of the firm allowed a captain to take his wife free.

Lying in her bed with her child, and listening to the torrents of wind, the young woman's restless mind touched at this and that foreign port. She had fetched away from each some detail, sharpened by distance. A lioness in the zoo at Antwerp, coming to the bars of its cage to stare at her with eyes in which she saw a desert; brass spittoons in the drawing-room of a fashionable hotel in New Orleans; the air, bright and unequivocal, of a Chilean harbour at midday; in the yard of a house in Santos, the colt branded with the letter Y, the trumpetlike scream and the noise of hooves.

Four years since, that was in 1890—then, she was twenty-two years old, and she had been married four years—she went a long voyage. In London the owner came on board. An old man, used to treating his captains as his equals. He poked his face round the door of the cabin, saw her, and said,

'Hey, where's your father?'

Taken aback, she repeated, 'My father?'

William came up behind the old man, who turned himself round heavily and said grumbling,

'Seems your daughter's lost her tongue.'

'Ha, she's my wife,' William Russell said.

He was vexed, and his wife laughed and told the story to the wife of another captain, who set it round.

The ship moved down the river to Northfleet and was there three days. William told her they were going to take a passenger to New Orleans: he would come on board at the last. Surprising everyone, not least the steward who had not made his berth ready, he came after dark the first evening. His berth was the best of three next the saloon. It was small—the *North Star* was not a passenger boat. During the time the ship lay at Northfleet he stayed shut in his berth all day, and after dark he walked up and down on deck past the officers' berths.

'There's something wrong with that fellow,' William said.

'What do you mean?' his wife asked.

William rubbed his jaw, reflecting. 'Ha, I don't know. But something's wrong.'

Inquisitive, the young woman slipped from their cabin that evening and stood at the head of the companion waiting for the man to appear below on deck. The lighted window of a house sunk in its security in the night, the hoop of darkness through which the earth and the river jumped, so held her that she did not hear him at first. He caught her ear when he was walking with his back to her. She felt a pang of fear. It sprang at her from his shoulders, covered—it was a mild night—in a thick cape. Where? where? she thought. She drew back, shaking. Then more calmly went back to her cabin before he turned. Once inside, in that room with its bright swinging lamp and the familiar smell of coarse blankets, florida water, tobacco, she smiled at her foolishness. You never saw him before.

The passenger appeared in the saloon for the first time when the ship left Northfleet. The captain's wife looked up and saw him in the open door of the passage. Shock

seemed to send her heart into her stomach. She knew him. A strong instinct warned her to sit still.

Russell spoke in the genial voice he kept for passengers and visitors from the firm.

'Ha, so you've found your feet. Steward! Sit down, Mr.—'

'Lengard.'

He put his hand on the back of one of the swivel chairs clamped to the floor. Glancing at the captain's wife he bowed very slightly.

'My wife,' Russell said casually. He waved his fingers —long thick fingers like roots—at the mate and the third officer. 'Mr. Read. Mr. Eliot.'

Lengard sat down and began to eat the food put before him. He must have been famished, since all he had asked the steward to bring to his berth during three days was cups of coffee and bread. He listened, polite and intent, when Russell told a long pointless story, to which the officers listened looking at their plates. They were used to Russell's habit of showing off to passengers. It was worse if he took a dislike to a passenger and markedly ignored him at meals.

Now and then Lengard looked up and across the table at the young woman. She had not spoken to him when her husband introduced him. He saw that she was pretending to eat. He studied her face carefully, without seeming to. She had changed a little since he saw her, a girl, on the pavement of the *Café du Soleil* in Dieppe, in sunlight. It was less change than the shadow of it. The delicate narrow face, narrow chin, short full lips, had hardened—it was so slight that only an acute observer could have seen it. Mr. Lengard was in the habit of ob-

serving acutely. The habit had saved his life more than once.

She slipped out of the saloon at the end of lunch very quickly. She was not there at dinner, and Lengard asked after her.

'Mrs. Russell isn't well,' the captain said. He spoke shortly. His passenger noted that Russell was offensive and touchy. He would have replied in the same voice if a passenger had questioned him about the ship. Neither his ship nor his wife was a passenger's business.

It is not easy to approach the captain's wife on board ship. If she wants to keep to herself there is no way of forcing company on her. The second day out Lengard appeared on the bridge. Russell sent an officer at once to tell him that passengers were not wanted up there. He apologised, distinctly enough to be heard in the captain's berth, and went away.

It would, naturally, have been disagreeable for the captain's wife to be disturbed by passengers—or for that matter by the chief's wife, who happened to be on board—when she wanted to sit outside.

Lengard supposed that the young woman was going through agonies of uncertainty. That did not make him sorry for her. He had been born without any organ, even rudimentary, of pity. But he had not made up his mind how he could use what he knew about her.

He was mistaken. Once the shock of seeing him had passed, Sylvia Russell was only angered by the notion of having him under her nose for weeks. It was too much. He might gossip about her to the officers. That would be serious. The story would be spread from one ship to another, until there was not an agent in any port, and not an officer employed by the firm, who did not know that

Captain Russell had picked a young woman up in Dieppe and married her. They would all know whose daughter she was, and the scandalous reason for her being in Dieppe. Her body burned at the thought. She couldn't calmly eat, or read, or sleep. The steward who took her meals to her in her berth said there was nothing the matter with her but bad temper. Neither he nor anyone else was sorry to think of Russell getting as good as he gave others.

In Antwerp Lengard never left the ship. He saw the captain's wife go ashore every morning. On the last day he saw her come up the gangway alone, while her husband stayed talking to someone on the quay. The third officer hurried across to give her a hand off the gangway, but Lengard was in front of him. The young man stepped back.

'I should like to talk to you, Mrs. Russell.'

The blood ran to her face. 'Really! What reason have you?' she said, with surprising harshness.

'More than one,' he said in a low voice.

She already had one foot on the companion. Without looking at him she marched off, holding her dress bunched in her gloved hand. Lengard saw the glove split across the knuckle.

There was an extra bunk in the captain's berth, used as a couch. He kept books and magazines under the mattress. She took one of these books out and sat with it on her knee, open, but she was not reading. Her blue eyes could become flat, like dull glass, when she was thinking—as though her mind turned its back. In her mind, even as a girl, there had been something secretive. She gave way to impulse, to sudden passions, but she was not simple, not candid. Living with Russell had sent her still further into herself.

He was uneasy when she sat drumming her fingers on the edge of the couch, her eyes staring and empty. What's she after?

She was making up her mind to have it out with Lengard. Part of her nature shrank weakly from trouble. It was very like one of the times when, a child, she stood up to her mother. She had never given way but she was sometimes ill afterwards.

Now that she had made up her mind she would not be able to sleep until it was over. After dinner she went back to the saloon with a dress she spread on the table, with tape-measure and scissors, and began to unpick. The steward at once closed the door leading to his kitchen and by a foot of passageway to the deck. The door at the other end of the saloon opened into a passage with the three berths on the right, and thence out.

Lengard came into the saloon smiling affably. He was fifty now. His face had been debauched by his life, without any trace on it of enjoyment. The thick lids and arched black eyebrows hung over the lower part of the face.

He sat down without being asked, half lolling in his chair, and lit a cigarette.

'You wanted to speak to me?' Sylvia Russell said.

Again he was surprised by her overbearing voice. It would have irritated him if he had not been sure of her.

'We ought to be able to entertain each other,' he said gently. 'We've met before.'

'I have no wish to be entertained by you. Or to entertain you,' she said, without any air of civility.

'Come,' he said, nettled, 'that's no way to talk.'

Emotion made her face red, and made her eyes start. 'If you have anything to say, say it,' she answered.

Lengard smiled. 'Perhaps I'd better say it to Captain Russell.'

'Perhaps you had better,' she said very drily.

Lengard did not allow any surprise to show on his face. He realised that she must have told her husband about Dieppe. He couldn't turn his knowledge of her to account there.

To make certain he said quietly, 'So it wouldn't astonish him to know you were in Dieppe four years ago, with a man you thought you were going to marry there? With Ling.'

'Did you think he didn't know?' she said, looking at him.

Now that she was talking to him, her latent panic had disappeared. She felt only contempt for him. She was too inexperienced to know she was talking to a man who had never done a kind act in his life and few he could have displayed. A new fear sprang into her mind. William is such a fool, she thought, vexed; if this Lengard speaks to him about Dieppe he'll make a row with him, everyone on the ship will hear of it.

Lengard's voice startled her. 'Did you know Ling is dead?' he said. He watched her.

She felt a wrench in her body. Her lips worked, and she put her hand to them without knowing that it was one of the gestures she would make when she was an old woman. For a moment, the last, she felt the claw of that bitter humiliation. And then a rush of triumph. *I* am alive. I, I, I.

She sat down, trembling.

'Where?'

'He died of fever in Johannesburg—two years ago.'

Two years after he abandoned me, she thought. She

realised that she had not forgiven him for it. His death had punished him. He was justly punished. In the darkness behind her mind a girl went on crying, and crying. But for herself.

She stood up and began to fold together the dress spread over the table. Lengard put his hand on it.

'Suppose I have a talk with your husband,' he said easily. 'He might like to know I'm not going to talk.'

'Talk?' she said. 'Talk where?' She looked at him with an unyouthful contempt, harsh. 'Do you suppose anything you could say matters? My husband won't thank you for speaking to him about it, I can tell you that. And you'll not find it very pleasant to be on the wrong side of the captain on board ship.'

She went out of the saloon. She saw with feelings of relief that the steward was not in his kitchen, and not in his berth–of which the door opened from the kitchen. He would not have heard voices.

The night cold sent a ball of blood to the back of her skull. She had the sense of being shut up in the ship from a dark immense bubble of air and sea. The rail of the companion, smoothly cold under her hand, steadied her. She was very tired. The pungent smell of tobacco in her room vexed her and she lay as far as possible from her husband in the double bunk: and slept–as the young can sleep–dropping in headlong.

From now on she took her meals in the saloon as usual. She even spoke sometimes to Lengard. She noticed that he became very friendly with the second officer. She saw them yarning together on deck. He made himself agreeable to Russell during meals, egging him on to talk of his voyages. There was nothing William liked better than to talk about himself. Most of his stories were untrue, or not

strictly true, and he contradicted himself. No one else dared to. And his wife held her tongue in front of the other officers. She disliked Lengard the more for pretending to admire him.

There were moments when she caught Lengard's glance turned on her with a cold irony. Then she felt a pang of alarm—the fear of ridicule. He could make her ridiculous. But she refused to think of it—her youth made her confident that the worst never happens. She was shrewd enough too to calculate that if he were running away from trouble in England he would be less ready to stir up trouble for himself—to no profit—on the ship.

The *North Star* was taking coal to Montevideo. Entering the mouth of the Plate they ran into bad weather. Towards six o'clock in the evening the glass began falling, in an intense heavy calm. When Mrs. Russell stood on the deck she found herself lifting her arms as if to ward off the air. It pressed down on the body like a weight of water. This calm lasted all night: she went to bed and slept, but kept waking with a jerk of all the blood in her body, as though it had struck some obstacle.

The glass fell steadily until midday. Then the first squall of a west-southwesterly gale struck the ship with heavy violence. Russell had told his wife what to expect —it was a *pampero*—and she had stowed away in locked drawers every loose object in their room. Now she took the cushion off the bunk and wedged herself in an angle of the berth, bracing herself with her feet against the wall. She was not afraid. It did not occur to her that she would die; her life in her was too strong.

The squalls increased in violence. The ship rolled heavily. Once she had a sensation that the sea had been drawn away underneath, so that they hung for a second over a

gulf before plunging sickeningly down. After hours, she dragged herself from the floor and stood up holding to the edge of the bed. Spray in a solid stream was passing the one port she had left unshuttered, and she could see nothing. At this moment her husband came in. He said something to her, shouting, but she could not hear him through the noise of the wind. With an angry gesture, he banged the brass shutter across the port. Bending over her, with his mouth to her ear, he shouted,

'Are y' afraid?'

'No.'

'This'll go on for days.'

'Oh, will it?'

'I've put the engines on "Slow," they can't do anything. You s'd lie down.'

'I can't,' she said, impatient with him.

'It's a *pampero.*'

'So you said.'

'What?'

'So you said,' she said loudly.

'We've battened Mr. Lengard down. In the cabin. He didn't like it.' He smiled childishly, as if the thought of his passenger gave him a simple pleasure.

With another glance round their room he went out, and she did not see him again for hours.

During this first day the sense of time was unchanged in her. She counted hours, shifting from floor to couch and back again to floor. The steward came up once, with a loaf and cheese and cold meat. He apologised for not being able to heat water to make tea. The next time she saw him, after three days, he had cut his head open and was bandaged. He brought her a tin of beef. She asked

after the passenger. The steward said he had been in to him twice and he was taking it badly.

After four days any sense of time had drained from her, from her joints and from the ends of her nerves. She slept at intervals, falling suddenly into unconsciousness; she ate a little at first, and rinsed her mouth from the bottle of water lying among her clothes in a drawer; her husband came in, spoke to her, and went out: at last she had no more feeling of time than a newly born child.

She opened her eyes and saw that her husband was in the room. She made to struggle up, but he knelt beside her, and looked at her with a strange placid kindness. Whatever else he is, she thought, he is a good captain. This thought came from the darkness in which her mind, like a seed, waited, and went into it again.

She realised that something had changed in the ship when she was asleep. The floor of the berth was at an angle which did not shift: the rolling and lurching of the ship had changed into a prolonged shudder. With an instinct to put off knowing what had happened she asked,

'What day is it?'

'Tuesday.'

My goodness, five days since it started. She sat up, and her husband put an arm round her.

'I don't think we can do anything,' he said.

'What do you mean?'

'I dare say we s'll go down. She's lying right over, and the sea's very high now. We've lost one of the men. Jenkin, his name was.'

She was afraid now. Yet her mind obstinately refused to think its last thought.

'What shall I do, Will?' she asked.

'Ha, there's nothing you can do,' he answered.

His face was placid and haggard: a ragged bristle spread up his cheeks, and he rubbed it with the palm of his hand as though he were thinking.

'Is it day or night?'

'Getting on for midnight.'

He stood up. She pulled herself up by him and held on to the desk.

'Are you going out again?'

'Why, yes.' He looked slightly surprised. 'I'll try to come back—you know—before anything happens. See?'

He kissed her and went out. She tried to attend to herself, straightening her dress and wiping her face with a towel. For the first time, she thought of her mother, and then she lost the sense of being shut up in a cell and felt the immense depth of space. It broke through the walls of the cabin, and she felt the horror of sinking into it, alone, lost. She remembered an evening when her mother took her feet into her lap to warm them between her hands.

It was difficult to stand. She lay down on the bed, and from one second in which she had been fiercely awake she slid asleep into the next.

Towards eleven in the morning Russell came in and told her that the glass was rising. During the day the wind dropped slightly but steadily. Towards midnight again the ship righted herself, and the rolling began again. But now it was little worse than in a normal high wind—the *North Star* was a hard steady ship. The chief managed to get steam going.

It was the eighth day when the captain's wife stepped out of their cabin and clung giddily to the lee rail. Air and sky were as clear as fire, the sea moderate. After the air in her room, this seemed to swell and burst in her veins like bubbles.

Suddenly a hoarse screaming voice. It was a frightful shock. She hurried back trembling to the berth. When the steward came up with tea she asked him,

'What was that noise?'

'Noise, ma'am?'

'Yes, a noise,' she repeated in a sharp voice. 'Like someone screaming.'

'The passenger was upset by being battened down. He was in a bad way when Mr. Read let him out this morning. He was off his head.'

As soon as Russell came in she questioned him.

'Oh, he's all right,' he said easily. 'I gave him something to quiet him. He'll be all right when he wakes up.'

'He didn't sound all right, Will.'

Russell gave his half childish, half mirthless little laugh. 'When I went in to him he was in a rare state. Singing out that he would be drowned like a rat. He looked a rare sight.'

She dropped him from her mind. If he had been another man she would have tried to rescue him from her husband's ideas of doctoring a delirious man. She did not feel called upon to help Lengard.

He stayed in his berth the whole time the ship lay in Montevideo roads. When they left in ballast, after discharging the coal, he came on deck. His looks shocked her. He had aged ten years. In the sea-dazzled air he looked yellow, mean, shabby. She was not sorry for him; he was an unpleasant sight.

He went ashore at Pernambuco. At Colon he went and did not come back. He owed Russell five pounds for wine he had drunk on the voyage. Russell was rare and vexed until he learned something that abated his anger. He was smiling when he told his wife.

'Ha, what do y' think? That fellow borrowed ten pounds from the second.'

'What fellow?' Sylvia said coldly.

'Why, that fellow Lengard. More fool Evans to lend it. He'll never see a penny of it again.'

When they reached Vera Cruz a letter from the office warned Russell that his passenger was going to be arrested at New Orleans—a criminal business to do with a mine in South Africa. There was also a letter from Lengard, from Colon, addressed to the second officer—telling him he had left enough money with the captain to pay his debts. Russell was ludicrously taken aback. 'Ha, I never thought he was that sort,' he said.

'What sort did you think he was?' his wife said.

On the table beside the young woman's bed was a cracked saucer holding a night-light. The yellow waxed paper was scorched, curling at the edge. Seen from outside, an opaque layer of melted wax at the bottom. A shrunken circle of light moved on the ceiling as the draught of the wind moved the weak flame.

She touched her child, to know by its warmth that it was living.

Sleep was as far from her as ease of mind. A lucid pressure on the inside of her skull widened it to hold the harbour, its few lights as weak as the flame guttering beside her, the darkness, cold, yet thick, like black pollen, between the sea and the sky, into which as into another less sluggish life she was drawn: with a joy she felt like a strong feather under her hand laid on her body.

From Colon the ship went to Vera Cruz. No harbour—only an open roadstead. Lying about on the edge of the

plain, the houses and the island castle reminded her of coloured bricks tossed down on a nursery floor. On the shore itself she found strange delicate shells. She who never troubled to bring home flowers or acorns from her walks spent an hour gathering shells into a box. She thought, A child will enjoy them.

The firm's agent had taken his wife to England to have a baby; a young man called Drew, his clerk, was in charge, and Mrs. Drew invited her to breakfast, at twelve o'clock. She had a little girl of five, Maimie. The two stood close together when Mrs. Russell came in, as though a defensive alliance came easily to them. Mrs. Drew softened a little at the sight of another young woman, and began a sad endless complaint about life in Vera Cruz.

'There's a wind here called a norther, and if you believe me, Mrs. Russell, I've often shovelled six buckets of sand out of the house in one morning. You'd think the whole of Central America was being blown out to sea. If only it were. Why did I come here? Isn't it strange to think of going on day after day, working, stooping to sweep, thinking, and in the end it finishes one day, and no one will ever know what it was like to live just this life? No one will know. For some reason I can't forgive it.'

'It's the same for all of us,' Sylvia Russell said.

But she believed that for her something different had been decided. Her life would not be a usual life. It would not end without something having been settled. Perhaps it would not end at all.

Maimie did not forgive her for the clear colour in her cheeks, her white skin, the modest elegance of her clothes. A storm of grief and hatred raged in her body, the body of a child of five, in her mind. Her skinny little arms trembled. She wanted to cry, to howl, to throw herself on

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the stranger and tear the clothes off her body. She felt towards her mother like a mother whose daughter has been put in the shade by a disgraceful rival.

On the way to the hotel where they were going to breakfast, she saw her father put his hand on the young woman's elbow to warn her of the stones on the path. It was the last straw.

'You needn't think he'll kill my mother so that he can marry you,' she said in a shrill jeering voice.

'Maimie!' her mother said, with reproach.

Mrs. Russell smiled. Why the child should behave so badly, she didn't know. It half pleased her. No child of mine would be allowed to behave disgracefully, she thought. Across the breakfast table she looked with a detached curiosity at the other woman. The hot moist air had pinched the youth out of her. Sylvia Russell felt cruelly strong and alive. She pitied the other woman and despised her.

During their last day at Vera Cruz her head ached. In the hotel where everyone boarded—there were no kitchens in the houses—she ate an ice at dinner, as she always did. Mr. Drew came across the room to speak to her. 'You shouldn't let your wife eat those,' he said to Russell.

'Oh, they're all right,' Russell said easily.

'You know they're not,' the agent retorted. 'Mrs. Russell might easily get fever at this time of the year. You know that as well as I do, Captain.'

Russell was furious at being spoken to in this way. 'You're quite mistaken,' he said stiffly. 'An ice is a very good thing to eat here. I happen to know there's no fever in the place now.'

Drew shrugged his shoulders. He glanced at Mrs. Russell, who looked back at him without kindness. Her head

was splitting, and Russell's foolish air of hauteur disgusted her. She wished the agent had held his tongue. He went back to his table, and Russell said,

'That fellow'd better mind his own business. I'll have a word to say about him to the firm. He's not the sort of fellow to be left in charge of an office. I'll see to it he isn't again.'

'Don't talk nonsense, Will,' his wife said. His spitefulness vexed her, but she was feeling too ill to argue with him.

In a few hours she was much worse. Even to drink tea made her sick. When they reached New Orleans she was too weak with fever and the sickness to stand. Russell fretted.

'We s'll be in quarantine for ten days, see? The doctor comes on board as soon as we touch at the quarantine levee. If you're in bed when he comes he'll have you into the hospital. Or else the ship'll be held up.'

'Why are we going into quarantine?' she asked languidly.

'There's fever in Vera Cruz. There's always fever there at this time of year.'

She looked at him. 'You told Drew there was none.'

'That I did not,' he said, blustering. 'I never said any such thing.'

She turned herself to the wall, to avoid the sight of him. And shut her ears.

When the doctor came on board she dragged herself up and stood with the rest of them in the saloon. She was holding with one hand under the edge of the table, but she managed an intimate brilliant smile.

'When can I go ashore, doctor?' she said in a teasing voice.

'Ah, you're thinking about the shops in Canal Street,' he said archly.

She felt her smile crawling round the inside of her skull. He went off to look at the crew. She sank into a chair, and the steward hurried in to her with the brandy he had poured out ready.

The drops of brandy and soda-water she took kept her alive. By the time they reached Vera Cruz on the way home she was able to walk a few steps, and to eat a little. But she wouldn't go ashore. Without thinking it, she shrank from letting Maimie's glance fall on her. No knowing what she would say. I shan't forget her, she thought—but what a thing to remember!

William called her out on deck one morning. He had a queer self-conscious air.

'Look over there,' he said, clearing his throat. 'See—she's a Garton boat. One of your mother's. The *Mark Henry*—I know her. A fellow called James is master of her. Sixty-seven if he's a day. Ha, she's a fine boat. Fine boats, those sailing-ships. It's too late for them, of course, but they were fine boats.'

He curved his thick grained hands in a gesture, involuntary, wrung from him by the pressure against his eyes of so many images, as bewildering as a cloud of seagulls.

In the afternoon Captain James came on board. He came not because he wanted to, but because he didn't doubt it was his duty to call on young Mrs. Russell. Since his wife died of fever in Vera Cruz he had tried to carry out her duties as well as his own, to the point of choosing and sending out Christmas and Easter cards to the friends she had in every port in the world where the *Mark Henry* had called. He had written down the names of all the

friends to whom she gave presents, so that on each trip these received the tin of Mazawattee tea, the scarf, the lace doily, she would have brought. *Mrs. F. R. Rayment, Civitavecchia, a shortbread.* After the first voyage made alone he knew them by heart—so that now, when he thought of New Orleans or Antwerp, instead of jetties, wooden quays and the street of yellow-faced houses, he saw a sunshade and a pair of silk gloves.

Before leaving his ship to call on the *North Star,* he looked round his cabin trying to see whether anything there would have seemed a suitable present for his wife to take to Mrs. Russell. In a drawer still taken up by her clothes he found the large book of Japanese views she kept to look at in bad weather. After a minute's questioning ('Shall I give it her, hinny? You must say'), he wrapped it carefully in a towel and went off pressing it under his arm.

Usually he had the greatest pains to find anything to say. Mrs. James always had done the talking for both of them. But his first sight of Mrs. Russell shocked him. He spoke—or rather Mrs. James spoke through him—in a concerned voice.

'Why, hinny,' he said, 'whatever have they been doing to you? Why, you're nobbut skin and bone.'

To her dismay Mrs. Russell felt tears rising from her throat to her eyes.

'I've had fever,' she stammered.

Her husband came into the cabin. 'Ha, you here?' he said affably. 'What are you doing here? What are you after, eh?'

Captain James took no notice of this. 'You should never have fetched your wife to Vera Cruz this time of year,' he said sternly. 'What were you about?'

'There's nothing wrong with Vera Cruz,' Russell said, with his uneasy laugh.

'There's everything wrong with it, for a young woman.'

'I don't think so.'

Turning his back on Russell, Captain James took Sylvia's hand between both of his wife's. 'You look after yourself, hinny, if your husband ha'n't the sense to. You s'd lie up now, and look through this book of Mrs. James's. It'll do you a world of good.'

He laid the heavy book in her arms as if it had been a child, and stumped from the cabin and off the ship without another word to Russell. Mrs. Russell cried after he had gone. He had made her feel that she was alone—lost.

At the end of the voyage she was still not really better. The first morning she went into the town to the shops a woman came up to her and said doubtfully,

'It is Mrs. Russell, isn't it?'

'Yes.'

'I hardly knew you.'

'Oh. I had a little fever in Vera Cruz,' she said coldly.

She never forgave her husband for his carelessness of her. It was one of the things that were slowly hardening her against him. And with his trick of complaining in the office about men behind their backs. And his lies. The careless fool, she said to herself; the careless stupid fool.

Now the child woke and cried. A little awkwardly, because of weakness, the young woman lifted her child and held open her nightgown. But it seemed that the child's hunger was not satisfied: she cried again, until the mother could not bear the piercing wailing cry so close to her.

'Oh, hush, hush,' she said.

Her voice was like a hand on the child. Who stopped crying and opened her eyes in a strangely fixed look, not the wandering unfocussed look of a three-days-old child. It seemed as though the whole of her tiny body listened. As though the mother's voice entered it by some not yet closed nerve and reached down to the heart. Then the lids fell over her eyes. She was quiet.

So now everything was quiet in the room, and again the young woman felt that she and her child were closed together in a warm cell of an immense dark cold bubble —the dark sky, the dark earth with its paths, and the place where she and the child lay with the familiar objects we summon round us, a chair, a table, cups, the words of a language we stammer without learning it.

The night-light was going to give up. The wick toppled over with a last quiver of flame, in which she saw the hands of her watch. It was one o'clock.

She lay awake until a little light came over the top of the blind, and a bird's single voice, repeated twice, from the tree nailed to the wall of the house. Then she fell asleep. In her sleep she was walking with her mother through the rooms of a house where they were going to live, her mother said. She was a child holding her mother's hand, yet she was in some way older. They reached the room which was to be hers in the house, and her mother turned to go, and at once she was seized by grief and anxiety. 'Don't go. Stay with me. We can live here in this one room, and I'll look after you and you will be safe.' She began to seek things for her mother's comfort, but smiling her mother went away.

Chapter 3

She had her first visitor, her sister Clara. Clara came into the room shyly, but eager. With a clumsy gesture of her arm she knocked a cup off the edge of the table, and Mrs. Russell said sharply,

'Do sit down, Clarry, you'll break something else.'

Clara looked at the child and thought, What sort of a mother will she make? I dare say far too strict.

'How are you?' she asked gently. As an elder sister she felt responsible, but it was absurd, since she had always been afraid of Sylvia's quicker mind and sharp tongue. Still, she would not give way. When she knew she was right she would not be browbeaten, even if it came to a quarrel. And Sylvia in one of her fits of rage was frightening.

'I'm tired, but I'm very well,' Mrs. Russell said, with an air of reserve.

She reflected that Clarry, with a considerate husband, and plenty of money to spend on herself, did not know what tiredness was. And she was not left alone at night with a week-old child.

'Were you glad it was a girl?'

'I didn't mind.'

'I came as soon as I could,' Clara murmured. 'I wrote to you.'

'Yes, the letter's somewhere.'

'I've brought her a little coat.'

Mrs. Russell took it. Her face softened. She was pleased by the soft fine wool and lace. It was what she would have chosen herself. Joy and affection sprang in her together, just as when they quarrelled as girls and one slipping into a shop to buy some small present, for forgiveness, met the other coming out with hers.

'It's beautiful, Clarry. Thank you. Thank you very much. I shall like to put that on her.'

In a different voice she added,

'I want her to have nice things.'

Clara did not speak. She knew what Sylvia was thinking. And yet if she had not set herself, stubborn as she was, against their mother— Shall I tell her that she must, yes, must, make it up? she thought. But she was afraid of Sylvia's anger.

She said awkwardly,

'Have you written to Will? I should think he'll be very pleased.'

'Yes, I wrote this morning,' Mrs. Russell said drily. She would not pretend that she cared what her husband felt. But she would not talk about him openly. There was still something between them; she still defended him, still did not want other people to see the rottenness in him.

'Where is he now?'

'On his way to the Plate.'

Clara stood up and moved closer to the fire. She noticed the small marble figure of a naked woman on the mantelshelf.

'Did you buy that, Sylvie? I must say I don't like it. I don't think it's at all decent.'

'What nonsense,' Mrs. Russell said, laughing.

It was the laugh, short and contemptuous, of their mother; the same harsh sound, in the throat of a young

woman. Clara winced. With a stubborn distraught air she repeated,

'No, it's anything but decent. Let me make you a garment of some sort for her. I could make it out of ribbon.'

'A sash, perhaps,' Mrs. Russell said derisively.

Clara said nothing. She couldn't be laughed at again. And when she looked at her sister, she was struck by her air of excitement and happiness. She looked very young—and sure of herself. It seemed she now expected something from her life, something satisfying and quite new—and splendid.

It is her child, Clara thought. She was almost afraid. No one should expect a child to be wonderful, or to cancel other disappointments. It is not fair. It puts too much on shoulders not able to carry such a burden. And in the end—to each his own death and no other. To live in another creature involves dying in him at some time, either during his life or at the end of ours. That's quite wrong. It's not a child's meaning.

After her sister had gone, the young woman picked up the little coat and carefully examined it. She looked at the finish, the joins, the lace, determined to find it imperfect. But it was not, and she laid it down smiling. She did not think of her child, as a poor woman, How can I clothe her? but, How most finely can I clothe her?

In foreign towns she soon found which were the best and most expensive shops. Then she would spend an hour walking past three or four of them, looking at everything in the window. If it were a large shop, so that she could walk about without being noticed, she would go in and saunter from end to end, looking, now and then asking the price, even making a purchase. She was always learn-

ing. So they wore shawls of black lace in Bilbao, did they? Very well, she would remember it and buy one on her next voyage. Or the agent's wife in Cadiz asked them to dinner: there was a square of lace under each plate, and secretly she bought four such pieces and hid them away with her linen at home. She would never give a dinner-party, but there they were, ready.

She loved lace. In Malta she bought a scarf of their silky lace and wore it, but only abroad. At home it was put away in blue tissue paper.

She felt a sharp, a terribly sharp wish to see the Maltese scarf now. Now at once, without waiting for Mrs. Fisher to come. She had gone home to get the tea for her own family; she would be back in less than an hour but Mrs. Russell could not wait. She got out of bed and walked unsteadily to the chest of drawers. It was the first time she had been out of bed, and she was surprised to find herself weak. She was tired of lying in bed.

Smoothing the scarf with her hand, she folded it in a new way and put it back. But now she thought that the things in the drawer could be better arranged. She turned them all out, and put them back neatly. Why not, since she was up, do the others? There were five altogether. She cleared and rearranged three. Her hands shook, she felt ill. I must finish the job, she thought, vexed. She emptied the last drawer. The room disappeared in a black ringing cloud, and down she went to the floor. Mrs. Fisher found her there, still unconscious, when she came back.

Mrs. Russell opened her eyes. She was in bed, and Mrs. Fisher was looking at her with a red face.

'Whativver were you about?'

'I was only clearing those drawers,' Mrs. Russell said jauntily. 'Why shouldn't I?'

'Th' bairn might ha' rolled on her face in bed, and choked.'

'Oh, nonsense,' Mrs. Russell said.

She lay frowning, and submitted coldly to being washed and made comfortable for the night. Because she would not think she had done something foolish she blamed the woman. An ignorant old fool, and I have to rely on her.

Mrs. Fisher had finished. 'There,' she said, 'good night, honey. Sleep well.'

'Good night.'

She set out on another night, with the child as her companion. The fire threw shadows along the wall like women following each other in weak sunlight. She watched them, and thought, So shall I go year after year, a little more tired every year, slower, heavier. Then the thought sank out of sight, in a sudden gaiety, springing in her, a fountain of pleasure in herself, the comfort of the sheets, the child sleeping at her left arm. I'll give her the Maltese scarf when she needs one, she thought; when I have others. Her happiness at this moment was alive in her as the child had been, and it moved in her under her heart in the same controlled hesitating way.

Sleep well, she thought.

Turning away from the night-light, she fell asleep.

Chapter 4

She had not quarrelled with her father. When the child was a month old he came to see her.

She admired her father and secretly thought of herself as like him, where actually she was like her mother without her mother's shrewdness. She had the same stubborn temper, the contempt for fools. But she was undisciplined. She was one of those whom life does not discipline: only it spares or defeats.

When he came into her room she was stooping over the child. She had a thick apron over her dress—no, a towel knotted below her narrow waist. The thought surprised him, Yes, she's a poor woman, she has to do for the child. He saw in her body, with every mark of the impatient energy he knew, other marks, faint now but certain with time to obliterate every other. He had perhaps caught her in one of those moments when the woman she would become, the woman hidden in her body and its gestures, took a step forward, sudden, irreturnable. To know that she would change hurt him.

'Well, Sylvie, how are you?' he said—expecting she would run into his arms as she always did.

She looked at him with an absorbed smile.

'What do you think?' she said laughing. 'She was always crying, it drove me almost out of my wits. Then the day before yesterday Mrs. Fisher said, I'll tell you what's the matter with that bairn, she's starving; you must get

her a bottle. So I sent out for one, and filled it with milk —rich milk, without water or anything. I didn't know any better. She drank the whole lot and went fast asleep. It ought to have made her ill. Think of it! More than a tumbler of milk at one month!'

Her father was taken aback and bored by her absorption in the child. Why so much fuss about its greed?—all children are greedy. It's quite right that she should be a devoted mother, he thought, but it will bore me. He was vaguely repelled by it.

'What are you calling her?' he said. 'Pantagruel?'

'No. What a name! Whose name is it? I'm calling her Mary Hervey. Mary Hervey Russell.'

He was astounded. She had quarrelled with her mother, turned her away from her house—yet she named her first child after her. Why had she done it?

He kept any hint of surprise or curiosity from his face. Partly because he had never in his life questioned his children about their feelings. But more from an instinctive wish to save himself trouble. He had all the selfishness of a civilised and sensitive person. The less one sees into other people's hearts the better. He had spent the greater part of his life since he was a young man trying to avoid overwhelming emotions. There are people whose distinction is to be overwhelmed. He was not one of them. He did not feel able to manage this fatiguing role. And at fifty-four one would rather not change the emotional habits of a lifetime.

He knew his daughter very well. Once she began to feel strongly about anything she could never turn back on her steps: she must rush from anger to anger, self-pity to more furious self-pity, until she choked. It was so with her fury against her mother. Before she could allow herself to for-

give her something dramatic must happen. She may even —without knowing it—may have hoped that her father would hurry back home and argue her mother into accepting Mary Hervey Russell as her favourite grandchild. Some magnificent offer must come. Then, he thought ironically, she will be saved from herself: in spite of herself.

One cannot save everyone.

Sylvia had lifted the child from its cradle. She held it up so that he could see it without the shawls that turned it into a mummy. He was startled. Without knowing much about young children, he knew there was something extraordinary about this child's head. The upper half of her tiny face was entirely forehead. He measured it with his hand. Yes, just over half.

'My dear, this child has a remarkable head,' he exclaimed. 'I shouldn't be surprised if she turned out to be a remarkable woman. Heaven help her if she is an intelligent one.'

'Why shouldn't she be intelligent?' Sylvia said, smiling.

'Because no intelligent woman has ever been happy,' her father said drily.

'I'd rather she were happy,' Sylvia said, with energy.

She saw that her father had taken a paper of some sort from his pocket, and she pretended to be very busy with the child. She had hoped he would give her something, but she was awkward when it came to taking money. She knew, too, that he had very little money of his own.

'I'm sorry I'm not a rich man,' he said, with a charming smile.

She took as thankfully as she could the cheque for fifty pounds. When he had gone, she stood holding it. Her mind had dropped into one of those—intervals—between

thought and feeling: a minute or minutes when time and our living in time are held back, like breath. She stirred from it to look at the child. Now that it had been pointed out to her she saw very clearly that the forehead above the closed eyes was unusual. She felt a pang of fear, then pride. Mine—my child, she thought.

She had another visitor the same day. Unwelcome.

Her husband's stepmother, Mrs. Edward Russell, lived only five houses from her, in one of the larger houses in Rope Terrace. She sat behind the lace curtains of her front-room window and watched everything that went on in Rope Terrace: on the evidence of some woman's looks, clothes, or seeing her nod to a man, she fabricated a whole story about her; she drank, she was living with men, she stole. If the horrified listener protested, 'I don't think it's true, Mrs. Russell,' she retorted triumphantly, 'I tell you I saw it with my own eyes, I saw her go in with him. Yes, look you, and she was wearing that blue jacket o' hers, th' one with the nasty braid down t' front. And boots. I saw t' buttons.'

If the boots failed to convince she brought in some intimate shocking detail. By this time she had convinced herself.

Sylvia Russell saw her coming in at the gate, and frowned with exasperation. I can't endure it, she thought.

She heard Mrs. Edward Russell open the front door. Hurrying into the passage she said,

'Oh, it's you, is it? Why don't you knock at the door?'

'I shouldn't think you wanted to be brought to t' door, with a baby to nurse.'

'I'd rather be brought to the door than have people walking in,' Sylvia Russell said sharply.

'Well, I'll mebbe think on it another time.'

'Please do.'

But Mrs. Edward had come to see the child, and she was not going to be edged out by a quarrel. She had learned that the young woman was not to be browbeaten. One couldn't say she liked her for it—she liked nobody but her two stepsons; towards them she felt an animal warmth and memory. But she didn't despise her—it was almost a human feeling, as near as she could come to one. No, that does her an injustice. She was generous with money when she had it. At the end of every half-year, when her dividends were paid, she gave away shillings and sixpences. And really she had very few. But she had some good old silver; when the child was born she had taken two spoons out of their baize and carried them in with her. 'Here, take these,' she said, thrusting them under her daughter-in law's nose.

'Thank you very much,' Sylvia Russell said. 'Are they for the child?'

'No. They're for you. You can have 'em, I've plenty more. I'll bring summat for t' child worth having when she's christened. I take it you'll have her christened in church—none of your common chapel does.'

Mrs. Russell had taken lately to attending the Congregational church, because she liked the minister, and because—more—she could never have brought herself to go into St. Mary's Church and sit there among people who had seen her sitting as a child and a girl in the panelled Garton pew with her mother. The Congregational service, with its mingling of freedom and restraint, suited her. She had not joined the congregation yet. The older woman's

comment was the one thing needed to make her. She pushed the spoons away from her on the bed. 'She'll be christened where I please,' she said drily. The other woman was not listening. She was hanging over the child, her face a great deal too close to her, and pinching her dry withered lips into a travesty of tenderness. 'Good bairn, good bairn, now what, now what?'

Nothing had been said since about christening. Mrs. Russell was wondering whether she would do right to rob the child of anything the older woman intended to give her after a Church of England christening.

With a frown she watched Mrs. Edward stooping over the cradle. She hated her child to be touched by the woman's rarely washed hands.

'H'mm, she looks well enough,' Mrs. Edward said.

'She is well.'

'You've put her on a bottle, I hear.'

Who can have told her? Sylvia Russell thought, vexed. 'Yes. I have.'

'I don't hold with a strong healthy woman not feeding her bairn herself. If you'd asked my advice—'

'I shouldn't think of asking advice, yours or anyone else's, about my child,' Mrs. Russell said.

'You'll mebbe regret it.'

If I ever do I shan't tell you, Sylvia Russell thought vehemently. She tried to control her irritation against the older woman.

'Will you stay to supper?' she asked.

'Why, what have you?'

'Only cocoa and some cheesecakes. But I could boil you an egg.'

'Nay, I'll not stay.'

'Very well.'

Gossip said that Mrs. Edward Russell finished off a bottle of port every evening and was fetched to bed at nine by her servant, dumb and tipsy.

'You may ha' your supper if you like. I'll stay another few minutes.'

To give herself something to do, because she could not sit talking to the woman, Sylvia Russell spread her cloth on the table and laid out cup and spoon.

'Why, isn't that one of them spoons I gave you?' Mrs. Edward said. Her eyes, flat pale stones, lay under her lids without moving. But saw everything.

'Yes.'

'Them's silver.'

'I know that.'

The older woman was displeased. 'I should ha' thought you'd keep them for better.'

'No one better than myself will be coming here,' the young woman said coldly.

She had no inclination to avoid offending the older woman. She had no fear of her rough tongue or of her temper. Her own was equal to it.

At this moment there was a knock at the back door. She went away to take in a parcel, and left it lying in the scullery, so that she wouldn't have to answer impudent questions about it. When she came into the room Mrs. Edward had her back to her; she was stooping over the cradle again.

'Well, what was't?' she said without turning round.

'Something for me.'

'You'll have been buying something?'

Before she could find a proper answer, the child made a choking sound. She flew across the room to her, and saw that she was half choked by the fragment of cake the older

woman had been cramming into her mouth. She felt a blind anger that could have struck Mrs. Edward dead.

'What do you mean by doing such a thing?'

When she had emptied the child's mouth and soothed her, she said with a face still crimson with anger,

'If you lay a finger on her again I'll not have you in my house.'

Mrs. Edward was intimidated, but she tried to hide it. 'I suppose it's my son's house as much as yours, my girl.'

"His or mine, you'll not come here unless you keep your hands off my child. I mean exactly what I say.'

'You mean, you mean,' the older woman mumbled. A look of dismay came into her face—for less than a moment, but it had been there. It was strange. Strange that a harassed child had not been driven, had not yet been driven, out of its last refuge in Mrs. Edward Russell's unwashed body and loose spiteful mind.

Chapter 5

William Russell did not come home until his child was six months old. From the Plate he went to New York, and there took over a larger and newer ship, the *Southern Star*. Her captain had been taken ill four days before she was due to sail, and had to be left in hospital. The *Southern Star* went to Yokohama and back to New York before coming home.

He reached his house in Rope Terrace early in one of those October evenings when a sharp bitter scent is distilled from the cold earth, the smoke of first fires, the harbour. It is a land smell, the smell of a port. He noticed it with an inarticulate pleasure. He had a great many words lying about in his mind, but few of them were suited with objects: they were themselves objects, taken up and fingered often during a voyage. The master of a ship at sea is isolated by his unshared responsibility, and to this loneliness Russell added every awful suspicion of his fellow-men he had been teaching himself since, a child of thirteen, he went his first voyage.

He felt aggrieved that his wife was not at the station to meet him.

When he opened the front door she did not come running into the passage. She called him from upstairs. He went up slowly. She was laying the child down in its cot as he came in. She half turned from it to kiss him, and said,

'How cold you are, Will! You can look at her, but don't touch her with those cold hands.'

He stood over the cot to look at his first child. He did not know what to say. He was not a man who cared much for children, and he was stiff and hungry after the long journey from Liverpool, and heavy with his grievance. Almost without thinking he touched the child's face with his finger. She gave a convulsive start.

'There,' his wife said in a sharp voice, 'see what you're doing, you'll wake her with your great hand.'

'She's all right,' he protested, and went away in a huff to their bedroom, where he dumped his bags, then stamped down to the kitchen and stood sulkily by the fire until his wife came downstairs.

He expected her to make a fuss of him; he thought she ought to be feeling uneasy, but she seemed not to notice his sullen looks as she flew round, preparing their supper. She chattered away eagerly enough, but all about the child. She didn't ask him about his voyage or if anything out of the way had happened. He might only have been away a day.

'And, Will, what do you think your stepmother did?—the meanest trick I ever heard. She said if the baby was christened in church she would give her something worth having. Worth having—those are the very words she used. So I had her christened by the vicar, and what do you think your stepmother's present was? A pinch of salt, an egg, and sixpence.'

'They're supposed to bring luck,' he said.

'Oh, are they? Well, I told her she could take them back. What use is an egg to her, or sixpence either? I said, I don't want them, you can take them away. She was rare and vexed with me.'

Whirling from the stove, the wooden spoon in her hand, she frowned at him like a rebellious girl. But her voice was

harsh and penetrating. He winced. He would have liked to defend his stepmother, but he had not the courage to argue with his wife when she was in this mood. Beside that he was feeling too ill-used to care. So he sat looking gloomily at his plate until she filled it with scrambled eggs. Then he shovelled the food into his mouth, deliberately noisy and careless, and wiped his moustache with the napkin he had pushed inside his collar.

His wife ate nothing herself. She sat tapping the edge of the table, her face turned away from him. His manners disgusted her, but she was trying not to complain of him on his first evening.

Suddenly he said,

'What have you done while I've been off?'

He had softened towards her enough to want to hear her talk. She was very attractive sitting opposite him, her cheeks flushed. The bodice of her dress of dark wool was fitted to her body, so that from the narrow waist it was wrapped tightly across her small breasts and buttoned at the throat. Her chin curved quickly into her throat, in a line that might be shapeless when she was older, but now was youthfully soft.

She was glad to go on talking. It was better than sitting listening to him as he sucked his food into his mouth through his moustache.

'I've joined the Congregationalists,' she said.

'What? You've what?'

'I've joined the Congregational church. I pay five shillings pew rent. The minister, Mr. Hanover, is a very clever man.'

'Hanover!' Captain Russell said. 'Well, what a name to go to bed with. Wherever did he get it?'

'From his father, I suppose,' his wife said coldly.

'Ha, so you've joined,' he said, trying to appease her by a pretence of interest.

'Yes. I said so.'

He cleared his throat. 'Well, I think I'll stick to St. Mary's myself,' he said.

'Do,' his wife said eagerly. Without knowing why, she did not want him to go with her on Sunday. The service, and the few words afterwards with one of the deacons or with Mr. Hanover himself, already held its peculiar place in her mind. As though, for the short space of an hour and a half, she was rid completely of Sylvia Hervey and her unmanageable ways. Seated in her corner of a pew, the seats narrow, smelling of pitch-pined wood, new, varnished, the plain walls, and the silvered pipes of the organ immediately behind the pulpit, the iron gas-brackets, in one window crude stained glass, the choir in best clothes facing the congregation in best clothes, she was simply young Mrs. William Russell; who had never had, who had never expected a different life. She enjoyed the sermons, addressed to people who wanted to be reasoned with, not preached at. To bring William with her, on the few Sundays he was at home, would ruin her new world. He did not live in it.

She glanced at him. He was fumbling with his brown knotted hands in the breast pocket of his jacket. He fetched an envelope out and handed it with an air of casualness to her.

'Something here,' he said with a nervous laugh.

She expected it was a present. When she drew the thing out of its envelope she found she had a photograph of him in Japanese dress. One hand held an open sunshade, and the other, resting on a short column, held up a partly opened fan. Ridiculous, she thought. But he was not

ridiculous. He was looking straight in front of him without a smile. His hair and his dark full moustache had been carefully brushed. He posed without the slightest notion that he was doing anything odd.

An older woman might have smiled a little over his vanity. Almost innocent. His wife only despised him for his folly. To expose himself to some booby of a Japanese photographer! How could he? she thought hotly. In gilt lettering across the bottom—*S. Ichida, Kobe, Japan.*

'Did this man Ichida lend you the dress?' she asked.

'No, the agent's wife lent it to me,' he said, smiling, and stroking his moustache. 'A very pleasant woman.'

'A rare fool she must have thought you in it,' Mrs. Russell said drily.

'Ha, she didn't,' he said, shocked. 'I wore it for a joke. See?'

'I see you wore it,' she answered. 'I don't see the joke.'

She dropped the photograph on the table and got up to clear the remains of supper. He went out of the room. When he had gone she was a little sorry she had spoken so harshly. But, really—he hasn't as much dignity as that chair, she thought, vexed. The other woman, the agent's wife, must have laughed at him. She felt cruelly ashamed for him. Snatching the photograph she pushed it out of sight into a drawer under some cloths.

He came in. She saw him look round for it. She said nothing.

'I brought you a roll of silk,' he said.

She took it with a doubtful smile. She would have been better pleased at this moment if he had brought nothing. But when she felt the weight of the bundle and pinched the fine strong silk in her fingers she was seized with happiness.

'I do love nice things,' she said gently. 'It will make Hervey some lovely clothes. Thank you, Will.'

'Hervey?' he said, puzzled.

'Yes, Hervey. Your daughter. Had you forgotten her name?' she said, laughing at him.

'Ha, I wasn't thinking of her by a name,' he said. He hesitated. 'Can't you wear some of it yourself? I didn't mean it all for the child.'

'White silk is too young for me,' she said, smiling.

She saw he was disappointed. In another voice—the voice of a cheeky little girl—she said, 'Don't argue with me.'

This other voice of hers was not deliberate. She did not intend to use it. It sprang from her sometimes, as though in defiance of her nature. As though at some moment in her past life a child had been punished and stood in a corner by her with such severity that no sound came from the corner again, except these involuntary murmurs. Her husband was the only person to whom she used it. In later years her children would sometimes hear it. One of them would hear it again and again after she died, when in memory her working-day voice was silent.

Next day she gave the child to William to hold for a moment. She watched him jealously, but he held it properly, he was a safe man with his hands. When she took it from him he said,

'She's light, eh?'

'No, heavy for her age,' Mrs. Russell said.

But William Russell had never held even a puppy in his arms. He could not remember that he had ever had a toy. He was apprenticed on a sailing-ship at thirteen, and what

gentleness there had been in his life—a little—went out of it. It was then, during that first voyage, he learned two things: there is no cruelty too nasty but some man will take a pleasure in inflicting it on the weak; and he began to turn away from himself, so that the image of a blubbering red-faced boy was lost behind other, fictitious persons, behind successive William Russells he could richly and heartily admire. The curious sensation he felt when he had the tiny body of his daughter in his hands went clean through all these to the blubbered boy. He went out in a hurry and came back with half-a-dozen toys, made of tin, with sharp cutting edges. Mrs. Russell snatched them out of the child's reach.

'What were you thinking about ever to buy such things?'

'What's wrong with them?' he protested.

'Wrong? Everything's wrong. She might cut herself with them or poke an eye out—they're a waste of money.'

She pushed them out of reach on a shelf and in a day or two threw them out.

The next day, Sunday, she lost her temper with him again. She went off to church in the morning, leaving the baby with Mrs. Fisher's Ruth. The first thing her eyes fell on when she came back was the cradle standing empty on the kitchen table. The girl gave her a queer look.

'Where is the child?' Mrs. Russell demanded. Her heart had jumped.

'The master came in and took her. He said it was all right,' the girl said uneasily. She was afraid of Mrs. Russell. She said afterwards to her mother, 'I was swithered wi' fright the way her eyes came out at me when I said.'

Mrs. Russell flew into the front room. There was Russell squatting on his heels, the child held up in front of him by her arms. He was trying to teach her to stand up.

Crimson with anger, the young woman snatched her child up and began to scold him in a loud hard voice. She felt at this moment that he had injured the child for life.

'I haven't done her any harm,' Russell said, taken aback.

'You don't know what harm you've done.'

'Anyone'd think I'd no right to touch her,' he said angrily.

'Nor have you,' his wife said. 'I don't allow you to touch her, and so I tell you.'

With a hurt sullen face, he hurried out of the room.

The child had given a convulsive start when she heard her mother's loud voice close to her ear. Now she looked up as though trying to see herself in her mother's eyes. This unwavering glance disturbed Mrs. Russell, and she bent her head laying her face against the child's, to avoid seeing it. Mine, my child, she thought with passion, with a bitter resolution. Resolution against the child's father. Against an easy way of living. Everything in her house—and in everything was silently included the child—to be as she said. Not your will, mine, she said, speaking to her husband. Wasn't it, as well, to the other in herself?

Chapter 6

The sitting-room of Mrs. Fisher's house was a greengrocer's shop. It was very small, low, and dark, and every smell of earth and growth had been stored in it for so long that you could think yourself living underground among roots.

Mrs. Russell stood there with her basket watching Mrs. Fisher turn over the apples to pick sound ones for her. A light afternoon glittered behind the dust of the window. To be here alone with Mrs. Fisher, with the smell of earth, and a smell somewhere of bread baking, was mysteriously comforting. Mrs. Fisher's voice started her from her thoughts.

'I don't hold wi' young married women drinking.'

'What did you say?' Mrs. Russell said.

'I said I don't hold wi' young married women having drink fetched to them from the Swan ivvery day,' Mrs. Fisher said in a dry voice.

The colour ran to Mrs. Russell's cheeks. 'I don't understand you,' she said coldly. 'What do you mean?'

'Why, yon girl of Fraser's you ha' working for you is at the Swan ivvery evening fetching you a bottle o' port. It's not right.'

'It certainly is *not*,' Mrs. Russell said. 'She doesn't fetch it for me, I can tell you. This is the first I've heard of it. I'll have a word with her at once.'

Mrs. Fisher's face had cleared. She was not at all abashed.

'I'm glad to hear it. Young women have tekken to drink before, to my knowledge, with their master at sea for months. I was bound to speak on it.'

Mrs. Russell hurried back to her house in a fit state to punish her girl. She soon got to the bottom of it. Her husband's stepmother was paying the girl sixpence a week to buy port for her at the Swan without saying who it was for. Of course everyone in the neighbourhood who saw her assumed it was for that young Mrs. Russell. Trembling with annoyance, Mrs. Russell told the girl to fold her apron up and go home.

'If your mother has any complaints to make you can send her to me.'

Weeping, the girl went.

As soon as the child was in bed in the evening Mrs. Russell went in to see her mother-in law. It was hardly seven o'clock, but the woman was already slightly tipsy.

'Oh, it's you, is it?' she said. 'Well, you can sit down. Will you have anything?'

'Nothing, thank you,' Mrs. Russell said disdainfully. 'It would be better if you had less, I think. And if you must drink I shall be glad if you will send your own servant to get it for you in future.'

She looked with distaste at the table set for supper with one plated fork and spoon, a worn knife, and cheap kitchen plates. There were handsome tea and dinner services in the cupboard, and a chest full of old silver, but she would never use her decent things. A penetrating smell, the ferment of an aging body in close unaired rooms, met one at the door.

'You've a rare tongue in your head,' the older woman said. She looked at her stepson's wife with hatred.

'Not at all. I only want you to understand clearly that

I don't care to have my servant going into the Swan to buy bottles of port for you. I've sent her home.'

'That's a nice thing to do—to punish a young gel for obliging an old woman.'

'There was no need for her to oblige you,' Mrs. Russell said coldly. 'You have a girl of your own. You didn't consider me, and my reputation, when you did it. In future if you want an errand done, speak about it to me, not behind my back to my servant.'

She had come in still angry, but she felt calm and triumphant now. A scornful pity entered into her distaste for the other woman. To be old, unloved, and disagreeable —what a fate! The startling difference between the other woman's future and her own struck her freshly as she turned to go and saw herself in the glass.

'Good night,' she said in a gentler voice.

Mrs. Edward Russell did not answer.

She spent hours every day washing and ironing the child's petticoats and dresses. Made of fine muslin and silk, pleated, tucked, frilled, they cost her endless labour. Nothing was too much trouble to turn the child out exquisitely neat and frilled. The wives of other captains might put money away if they pleased, or if their husbands insisted on it. Mrs. Russell spent out every penny.

But if she was a fond mother she was strict. Even before she could walk the child showed she was wilful. The mother set herself to correct it. She left her asleep in her basket one morning, and an hour later found her halfway up the stairs. She had turned the basket over and crawled out into the passage. Mrs. Russell brought her down and dumped her on the floor.

'Stay there,' she said sharply.

Instantly the child turned and crawled back and began pulling herself onto the first stair.

'No,' her mother said in a warning voice.

This time she slapped her sharply on her arms. Howling, the child went back to the stairs and tried again. Mrs. Russell carried her back, and slapped her. It was too risky a game; she might try it some day and break her neck.

But the moment she set the child on the floor she turned back weeping to the stairs. She tried six times, the tears streaming over her face, and each time Mrs. Russell slapped her. At last, losing patience, she carried the child upstairs and dropped her into her cot, to cry herself to sleep.

She would never let the child get the better of her. But she was proud of her spirit. When, after a struggle of their wills, the child gave in she felt a passion of love. It moved in her body like a bird, its beak pierced her.

The second Christmas after Hervey's birth Mrs. Russell was alone. Russell had hoped to be home, but his ship was sent to New York from the Plate instead of coming in.

She went out the Saturday before Christmas to do her shopping. She went in the afternoon, because the shops would be lit then in the early dusk. Dusk came from the harbour like a flight of brown birds; it poured into the narrow steep streets, brushing the stones of the old houses, salt-corroded. In the frosty darkness each small shop promised anything to make you look. Evergreen and holly blazed under the globes of gas; holly stuck in the great double Stiltons, holly and an orange in the pigs' mouths, holly on the breasts of geese, holly in a sack of frumety,

holly lying on piles of shirts and lace collars. The streets were lively with women doing their Christmas shopping. The ecstatic faces of children against the windows, as little noticed as tadpoles, sent excitement quivering into the stream. And the dark harbour itself, at the centre of it all, moved with a light sound of lips against the piles of the bridge, under the clatter of carts, under the voices of fishermen shouting to one another across the street.

The lighted shops had all the glory to themselves. A few weak street-lamps spoiled nothing. The shops in the dark streets were able to give off their mysterious excitement. How young is the one in us it touches. Perhaps one that does not see, does not hear, does not breathe—but moves?

Mrs. Russell made her last purchases. She was laden, but she walked quickly and gaily. She loved the Christmas shops. She had been from one to another, getting from half a dozen what she could have had from one, for pure happiness of going in and standing there waiting her turn with others, the wooden boards warm under her feet, and so looking through the door into the darkness and the lights of another shop across the street; inside, under the white ceiling the crude light, the small space further diminished by the confused show, the piles of candied peel and bunches of figs, the boxes of two long Christmas candles, barrels of oranges, tins of Mazawattee tea, bags of almonds, the fresh country piles of butter and sides of bacon. Or crammed into a narrow low room, gloves, coiled ribbons, frills, rolls of canvas, blankets, veils.

She was not tired. She knew she would never be tired. Never tired of the narrow streets. Never tired of crossing the bridge over the harbour. Never, never, never. There would be these modest friendly shops, there would be the captain's young wife, to visit them, for ever.

There was a good fire in the kitchen and the girl had set her tea ready. Mrs. Russell dropped her parcels on the table, told the girl she could go home, and took the child from her. When the girl had gone, she was delighted to think she and the child were alone in the house. She walked about, humming and smiling. Her body in its dark woollen dress gave off a faint scent the child recognised. It was perhaps only an odour of youth.

After tea she sat down to make up her accounts in the book. Still smiling, she added up the sum on her fingers on the table.

		s.	*d.*
Decr. 23	Ingredients for cake	2	6½
	N. gowns 5/– Frame 6d	5	6
	Clara's present	4	6
	Charity		6
	Cheesecakes 6d Bed quilt 11/–	11	6
	Labour hired 2/11½ Coals	9	8
	Brawn 4½d Peel 4d Veil 6½d	1	3
	Congregational Hymns	2	6

The page was full now, and the book with it. She squeezed in the last figures, blotted them, and put the book away in one of the little drawers of the desk in the front room.

Chapter 7

When Hervey was three years they moved to a larger house. Mrs. Russell was going to have another child and she was determined not to have it in Rope Terrace.

The new house was at the top of a steep bank called North Bank. It had three stories, and a room on the first floor with two windows. This room had decided Mrs. Russell to take the house—it reminded her of the drawing-room of her mother's house near Middlesbrough. That was sixty feet long and had eight large windows. This room in the second house of her married life, and her life itself, were seen in a diminishing glass turned on them from a moment in the past. As if knowing she could never now have the luxury and calm of her life as a girl, she was content with symbols of it. A chair she bought this year stood for the score of chairs in a room of her mother's. There were white-painted oak panels in the other drawing-room; she chose for hers a white wall-paper; the satin and frosted stripes mimicked panels. On the mantelshelf a couple of vases in red and white glass reflected Mary Hervey's cupboardfuls of Bohemian glass, and a painted fan spread itself for the hundred Italian fans of her collection.

A small garden sloped to the street, with a lilac and a laburnum. In May, when the laburnum was scarcely out, the lilac thrust up its flowers that gave her the same de-

light to touch as soft wine-coloured velvet. She bought some red daisy-roots in the market, fresh and sturdy, earth clinging to their leaves. She was planting them, kneeling on the path, when the Congregational minister, Mr. Hanover, stopped to speak to her.

'Will they grow?' he asked.

'I hope so,' she said, laughing at him.

He saw that she was going to have a child, and he thought—ashamed to have such thoughts—that she should be painted, with her skirt spread idly round her, her bosom lifting quickly with the effort she was making, her arms surprisingly full and strong, her arrogant and placid look. He envied her energy. His own was never up to this air sharpened by the North Sea. And then he was seized by pity for her. She would grow older and her body would tire. She who had been a girl would be an old woman going down alone into the earth after the years when she had had work morning and evening and had wakened to known voices and hands.

These were no thoughts for a minister.

To shake them off he wanted to say something about the child watching her. No, watching him, fixedly, with clear rather pale eyes (were they blue, grey or green?); their brilliance, and the fixed dark pupils, were like a cat's. Mr. Hanover felt uneasy.

'What do you call her? Mary or Hervey?'

'Hervey.'

'She looks well, and pretty.'

Mrs. Russell frowned lightly at him. He realised that he had broken one of the rules of Danesacre family life: Never praise a child to its face, or it will get above itself or go to the bad.

Her second child was born in August, a son. This time she engaged a midwife, but Mrs. Fisher came in to do the work and look after Hervey. It was her arm, red, thick, and shapeless, the young woman seized when her pains became unendurable. She did not endure. She threshed this way and that, struggling to free herself from the barb fixed in her body. 'Nay, nay, nay,' Mrs. Fisher scolded her; 'it's not the way.'

But it was the only way she knew. She did not think of her child during this time—not until it was born. When Mrs. Fisher said, 'Ay, it's a boy this time, honey,' she was pleased. She had wanted a son.

A week after this Russell came home. She had been eager for him to see the child, but when he came into the bedroom she turned against the smell of tobacco and stuffy heavy clothes that came in with him. She could scarcely breathe near it. And he never asked to look at the infant. Until he was going out and turned in the doorway and said awkwardly,

'Well, where's the boy?'

'There,' she said, pointing towards the cradle standing on two chairs in the window.

Russell went across the room and looked at his son's red wrinkled face. He took no interest in him. None of his children moved him after the first. But he tried to please her by saying something.

'Shan't I close the window? He's in a draught.'

'On a day like this?' his wife cried. 'I'm thankful for a breath of air.'

'Oh, very well.'

He went out, and she lay with closed eyes, thankful to be rid of him. She knew he cared nothing for his son, and the

thought pleased her. Her children were to be hers. She wanted no interference from him. It must be her will over them, her voice they must listen for: love—and fear —only her

'What s'll you call him?' the midwife had said to her when she was washing him. 'After his father, eh?'

'No,' she said at once. 'I shall call him Jacob.'

She had made up her mind one February morning in church, when Mr. Hanover was reading the lesson, and at the words 'Behold thy servant Jacob' the sun sent a ray of light through the blue and red glass of the window behind the organ and it seemed to seek her out in the congregation like a light touch, like the hand her mother used to lay on her cheek on one of those rare evenings when she came to see her children in bed. The shape of her room in her mother's house flowered in her mind for a single instant. If I have a son, I shall call him Jacob, she thought, suddenly pierced by a longing for the happiness she now knew to have been living in her in those days.

She had no wish to call the boy after his father. No, let him begin afresh.

CHAPTER 8

SHE had made a few friends, but she was not intimate with them. She was not a woman who cared much for friends, and she enjoyed her own house better than other women's. There were perhaps four women, all captains' wives, with whom she was on terms. She would go to tea seldom, or they met in the street and talked. There is a *lingua franca* of captains' wives. It would go,

'Well, how are you, Mrs. Russell? I must say you look well.'

'And are you well?'

'Oh, I get along. Have you heard of Captain Russell lately?'

'I heard this morning from Santos, the day before he left. They had a smooth passage.'

'I suppose you'll go to meet the ship when he comes in.'

'Oh, I dare say.'

Mrs. Russell had not been on the ship since she had Hervey. The sea bored her and she hated the discomfort of the small cabin, and living close with Russell. He had disagreeable ways. When she gave his socks to the steward to wash he grumbled that the fellow would rub them into holes; rather than have them often washed he wore them for a fortnight at a time, and in hot weather she could not endure them in the cabin at night. She dropped them outside the door. He quarrelled furiously with her about it. After one of these quarrels she went out, a coat thrown

over her night things, and saw the glittering Southern Cross for the first time moving in the circles of the sky.

But he liked her to come on the ship. 'Captain Russell wants me to go the voyage with him,' she told Mrs. Fisher, 'but I'm not anxious.'

'You s'd go, honey,' Mrs. Fisher said. She sent the young woman a shrewd glance from eyes more used than an old knife. 'It's not right to leave a man overlong with himself.'

Mrs. Russell shrugged her shoulders, but she felt uncertain. The ship was coming in to Glasgow. She decided to go there, and take Hervey. The boy was a year now. Mrs. Fisher would take him for her. Old as she was now, sixty, and as stout as two women, she went about minding the business of every sick and sorry woman in the neighbourhood.

Mrs. Russell carried him over, a fat heavy lump of a baby, when he was asleep. Even in his sleep he kept his brows knotted in the frown that made women in the market cry, 'Eh, what a black bairn!'

She handed him over and came back, wishing she hadn't done it. It was the first time she had left one of her children. She had to harden her throat against tears. It was only for a short time. Other captains' wives left young children for months, when they went a voyage. But she never liked leaving hers.

And yet something in her wanted change, a foreign city, the odour of foreign harbours.

She had to waken Hervey in the dark next morning. Still more than half asleep the little girl dawdled over her breakfast in the kitchen. To save light Mrs. Russell put a candle on the table, and the child stared at it instead of

eating. She stretched her hand out and laid it in the circle of light.

'Look, it's on the bottom of the sea,' she said.

'Get on, get on,' her mother said impatiently. She took the bottom of the loaf and broke it into a saucer and poured tea over it. 'Eat that.'

'Why must I?'

'We must finish everything up, we can't leave it. It will be wasted.'

Buttoning on the child's coat, she felt the silence of the house coming closer to drown them. She ran upstairs again to make certain all the windows were fast. The child waited for her at the foot of the stairs, looking back placidly into the shuttered room, not afraid, or not showing it, of the silence. Strange journeys, these taken with a child. Hervey never cried or complained; and in the trains seemed to be giving support to her mother against the other passengers, not asking for it.

The sun was rising when they left the house. Light flowed into the harbour and the sunlight broke up the old houses into a bright rubble.

When they reached Glasgow they had the further journey on to Greenock. It was Mrs. Russell's first visit to the *Southern Star*. She was pleased by it at first, but in a day or two the weather turned close and hot; she imagined she could smell the streets near the dock even in the early morning. It was too hot during the day to take Hervey into Glasgow, and they were forced to stay on the ship.

One afternoon the little girl said, 'My head aches.'

'What nonsense,' Mrs. Russell said at once, 'children don't have headaches.' She thought the child was repeating something she had heard.

But in the evening Hervey was sick and by next day she was obviously very ill with a fever of some sort. The doctor they called in was at first angry with Mrs. Russell. He thought she had been negligent. He told her peremptorily to bring the child ashore. Captain Russell took two rooms at the top of a dreary six-storied house in Greenock and she moved in there. During the day she had a nurse, and as she went up and down the stairs, doing the shopping, in the heat, she felt less anxious than vexed. She blamed Russell for getting her to come to Greenock in August. It was like taking her to Vera Cruz in the bad season. She did not say to herself, If the child dies it will be his fault—because it didn't occur to her that her child could die. Hervey would never behave so badly.

She was standing looking down at her in her cot on the third morning, with the doctor. And suddenly she knew that the child was nearly dead. A shock of fear and surprise paralysed her. She stood without moving.

'Yes, she's sinking,' the doctor said gently.

At this very moment Hervey opened her eyes and looked at her mother. The movement of her eyelids might have been automatic but for the look. It was as direct as a word.

When have I seen her look like that?

The memory came close, touched her with a sharp wing, and made off. Without allowing her to lay hands on it. She turned to the doctor.

'She's not going to die,' she said fiercely.

The doctor patted her hand. He knew all about the intuitions of mothers. He saw them falsified every day.

Speaking to the nurse outside the door, on the landing of the shabby gaunt house, he said,

'If she hasn't gone by eight o'clock, offer to stay on with the mother. She shouldn't be alone when it happens.'

In the evening at eight o'clock Hervey was still alive. The nurse did not move to put on her cloak, and Mrs. Russell said sharply,

'It's time you were going, nurse.'

'Well, I'm thinking I'll stay on a little,' the woman said.

Mrs. Russell raised her eyebrows. 'Oh, no,' she said. 'It's time you went and you'd better go. I don't need you to help at night.'

'I thought there might be a turn in her tonight.'

'I don't want to hear what you thought,' Mrs. Russell said coldly. 'It's your time for going and I don't want you. So go.'

Intimidated, the woman went. Mrs. Russell stayed alone, staring, it seemed, at nothing. It was hard for her to sit still. Her mind picked up trivial things, the corner of a carpet in her own house, a cracked plate, the flounces on a gown. She went and fetched the gown from the other room. She decided to sew dress-preservers in the sleeves. When she was doing it, the child stirred and said something indistinct. It was the first time she had spoken for days. Mrs. Russell bent over her, listening.

'What did you say?' she said at last.

'It's time for us to go home,' Hervey said without opening her eyes.

How can she know we're not at home? the mother wondered. 'Yes,' she said. She waited. Hervey did not speak again. 'Go to sleep, my darling.'

The child sighed, and seemed to settle herself in the bed by tiny almost imperceptible movements of her limbs. Mrs. Russell sat sewing. She ripped off a flounce and put it back higher up the skirt, and altered frills. Staring at the dark silk by candlelight, she felt her eyes aching and closed them; and when she opened them it was daylight and the

candle guttered to the paper, and brown curls of paper fallen on the table. She started up. But the room was as usual, and Hervey, when she touched her, asleep and warm.

Russell was a thoroughly safe careful captain, a good servant to the owners, but hard and suspicious with the men. He had other ways to punish an officer who offended him than by talking about him confidentially in the office. In foreign ports he would keep back the man's letters. He collected the letters from the agent when he went ashore; in the evening the steward came to him to get the men's letters, and the officers for their own. He would look the man he was punishing in the face and say affably, 'Nothing for you, today, Evans. Ha, I think your wife's forgotten you,' when all the time the letter was lying under his hand in a drawer.

He had a habit of creeping up behind two of his officers when they were standing together, to hear what they said. He was a heavy man, but he could walk without a sound.

He thought everybody was trying to cheat him. The old owner Thomas Arnold died, and his son, a young man, got the firm. At once Russell said to himself, He'll make changes. Sure enough, when the ship was in Santos something happened. An order from London came to the agents to examine the holds of the *Southern Star*. On the voyage home Russell brooded day after day about it, and in Greenock he wrote the new owner a long and involved letter complaining that the Santos office had interfered with him. His wife was vexed when she heard. He'll lose his ship, she thought. And then what?

She worried about it until young Arnold sent a friendly

answer. Russell was very cock-a-hoop. He brought it to her with a complacent face.

'Ha, you see,' he laughed. 'You were wrong, and I was right.'

She took the letter.

Dear Sir,

We are in receipt of your letter of the 3rd August and regret exceedingly that you have been so much put about respecting the condition of your holds. It is only fair to inform you that in our Correspondent's report on your vessel it is stated that nearly the whole of your holds, including the Bunkers, have been chipped and painted and are in very clean condition. It gives me great pleasure to have received a report of this sort, as it just confirms the opinion I have always had of you, that you are very zealous in your Owner's interests and keep your vessel as far up to the mark as circumstances permit.

Yours faithfully,
For the Star Steam Shipping Coy Limited,
JOHN ARNOLD.

'Yes, that's a fine letter,' she said drily. 'But I shouldn't presume on it if I were you.'

Russell was offended. 'I don't know what you mean,' he said. 'I intend to stand up for myself—that's all.'

'You may have been right this time,' his wife said, not relenting, 'but it won't do you any good in the end to write in foolish grumbling letters. If I were you I should write a civil letter thanking Mr. Arnold. Shall I draft it for you?'

'I'll ask for your help when I want it,' Russell shouted. He was humiliated that she supposed he didn't know how to write to an owner.

'There's no need to shout,' his wife said.

'Am I shouting?' he bawled. 'I'm telling you to hold your tongue. I know what I'm doing. You—you think you know everything. You think you couldn't make a mistake.'

'Oh, no, I don't,' she said wearily. 'I made a grievous mistake when I married.'

Merely saying it brought her to the edge of tears: she felt suddenly desolate.

Russell thought he had defeated her. 'If you ask me, the boot's on the other foot,' he said, sneering. 'I must have been daft or something to take what another man didn't want. I never believed yon cock-and-bull tale about Ling fetching you to Dieppe and going off. A likely story!'

He regretted it the moment he had said it. He knew perfectly well she had told him the whole truth about that episode, and he could have bitten his tongue out. He would never admit it. Without giving her time to answer, he hurried out of the room, slamming the door.

Mrs. Russell's anger left her suddenly. It went out with him. She laid both her hands on the table, and looked at them, at the knuckles thickened by housework. She was tired, without the strength to get ready for bed. I married him, I married this mean creature, she said to herself. I was that fool. She did not say, I threw myself at his head to get away from myself. She would never see herself as plainly as that. There had to be some rightness in everything she did, excuses for it. For the moment she felt only bitterness because she had not known what he was. I've lived with him twelve years, I'm thirty, she thought wearily: who knows how much longer this will go on?

At last she got into bed, without brushing her hair or rubbing into her hands the vaseline she had bought. When Russell came in she was lying with closed eyes but she was

not asleep. He did not look at her; he came into the room with an air of bravado and then stood, rubbing his chin, as though he had prepared something to say to her and he was taken aback by finding her in bed. She watched him through her eyelashes. He looked such a fool standing there that she was sorry for him.

She said gently, 'Why don't you get undressed?'

He started and looked at her. 'I—I—' he said.

'Don't stand there. Get undressed. It's late.'

He came over to her, resting his hand on the bed. Its nails were broken and black; she stopped herself just in time asking him to wash his hands before he touched her.

'I didn't mean—' he mumbled.

'Never mind,' she said, cutting him short. She had no patience to listen to him, and the pity she had felt for him was running out. She closed her eyes.

'Shall I plait your hair for you?' Russell ventured.

Before this evening she would have answered in her other voice, in the cheeky voice of the little girl. But if she felt the impulse it was only—so deeply that she never knew what she was doing—only to reject it. She never spoke to him in this voice again. It was years, many years, before another person heard it.

'No, I'm too tired,' she said.

He hadn't the sense to keep quiet. 'You aren't still angry?'

'No, no,' she said, smiling.

It was true: she was not angry. But what he had said, his mean taunt, was still in her mind; and it would always be there; she would not forgive him for it. He had killed with it what little respect she still felt for him, and from now on she would never trust him again. He had done for himself.

She turned more and more to her children. First to Hervey. In the tussle of wills between them the child was always defeated, but sometimes she won for a moment.

One winter afternoon, when she was five, she persisted in singing at the top of her voice after her mother had told her to be quiet. She went out of the room and bawled louder and louder, a gloomy song about a cat. Mrs. Russell opened the door and said firmly,

'Very well, Hervey, you must go. I can't keep you in my house any longer.'

The child stopped singing. 'Where shall I go?'

'You must go away from here.'

She waited for the flood of tears she expected, but Hervey turned and stumped upstairs and came down with her coat and bonnet. 'Which of my toys can I take?' she asked coolly.

'You can't take any of them,' her mother said.

'Oh, very well.'

She turned towards the door. Mrs. Russell was at a loss and said quickly,

'Perhaps you'd better wait for the morning, it's getting dark now.'

'Oh, no,' Hervey said, 'I'll go.'

She did not show any sign of being upset or hurt. Mrs. Russell had to take her coat off and say, 'No, you must stay with me.' The child turned pale then, and was very quiet for the rest of the day.

She was sometimes unmanageable in a rowdier way. A devil of recklessness entered into her, and she rushed from punishment to punishment. When Clara came to stay the two ladies were put to shame by her in the chemist's. She answered a whispered reproof from her mother by shouting,

'Whip me, would you? I'll whip you. I'll whip, yes, both your bopsies.'

She had a second self called Martha. Martha was a good gentle child, who dusted and swept, with deftness—indeed, only lived to help her mother. She had no other life —because the instant Martha's carpet-brush was taken from her Hervey came back.

Without knowing it, Mrs. Russell expected Hervey to think like a woman of her own age. She sometimes whipped her for having a perverse mind. One day they were invited to tea by the minister. During the meal Hervey came round the table to her mother with a very cunning look on her face. 'These spoons are silver, put them in your pocket,' she said. Mrs. Russell crimsoned with embarrassment and anger. She noticed that Mr. Hanover was shaking with laughter. Perhaps then it was not so shocking. Her frown vanished; she gave up the idea of punishing Hervey when they got home.

'Don't be silly,' she said, taking the spoons from Hervey but holding her by the arm. Hervey's hand, long-fingered, rested on her mother's knee. The palm was still a little swollen: she had been caned that morning on both hands for taking the Bible to stand on to reach the table. 'Standing on God's book!' She darkened her crime by saying she hadn't known it was God's book.

Mr. Hanover changed the conversation. 'I'm afraid old Mr. Ward is dying,' he said.

Hervey looked up. 'What is this dying?'

'Mr. Ward,' he said kindly, 'is going to see God.'

Hervey pulled at her mother's arm. 'Hadn't we better give him that book of God's to take back with? We've kept it a long time.'

Did she mean to be impudent? The moments when she

'couldn't understand' Hervey disturbed her as much as deliberate bad behaviour. What she saw at these moments was not anything alien but the reflection at a distance of her own blind impulses. She did not admit that she had made any mistakes, and yet she thought, If she is going to make the same mistakes I made!

She was not a patient woman, Sylvia Russell: she had been a self-willed impatient girl, generous but without overmuch kindness. Now, although she deeply loved her children, she could not forgive them for sins against herself. When Hervey was obstinate Mrs. Russell punished her as severely as—if she could—she would have punished all the people, beginning with her own mother, who had thwarted and disappointed her. When she had whipped Hervey into a sobbing repentance, her heart weakened with love and pity, and she soothed her and took her back into favour. Both were then happy.

She sent a fierce glance, meant to intimidate, into the little girl's eyes lifted to hers. Hervey met it without flinching.

Mr. Hanover felt the uneasiness in the room. He tried to change it by calling Hervey to come and talk to him. She came obediently and watched him rather than the missionary prints he showed her. There was something baffling, something cold, in her glance. The minister remembered poking his walking-stick into a clear pool on the shore and his surprise when it struck the sand he had imagined a great way farther down.

Chapter 9

Once, during these years, Mrs. Russell went to the old church on the cliff top. It was the memorial service for Queen Victoria on February the second, 1901.

She chose a pew where she could see without being seen the old Garton pew. There was no one in it; her mother had not, as she had half feared, half hoped, driven from Middlesbrough. The pew stayed empty in a full church.

She looked across the congregation. All were in black. Strange that the old Queen's death should loose this flood of regret and half-real grief. Something is finished, Mrs. Russell thought. She felt uneasy. It was a dark morning; the light falling through the shallow irregular windows was the grey colour of the North Sea below the cliff. Below the galleries shadows hung over the kneeling people. Climbing two hundred (but one) steps from the harbour the generations passed into the church, daughters forgetting mothers and forgotten in their turn, dust below the roots of the rank grass of the cliff top. No, no, she thought, in a passion of her blood; let me keep this. She was seized with an angry grief at the thought that the familiar wood under her hand, the homely grandeur of galleries and pulpit, the outer flagged path, the harbour and beyond it the west cliff and the houses, the sea, the coast, would be taken from her hands, from her feet, from her eyes. It was too cruel. It was unforgivable.

Her hand holding the leaflet of the service trembled. She turned it over and read the last hymn.

. . . 'For a space the tiréd body
Lies with feet towards the dawn;
Till there breaks the last and brightest
Easter morn' . . .

My life isn't at an end, she thought. (She was thirty-three.) There must be something to come: it's not possible that the things I've had so far are all. An energy springing from the depths of her being refused to be defeated. She was impatient. Begin, begin, she said to her life. While other people were mourning a death she looked for—what? She didn't know, except that it must change her life.

She always slept well. But the night after the service she woke from a disturbed dream, and lay, her heart beating too quickly, in the darkness and silence of the room. At first she was not certain where it was, because in the instant of waking she had been in some other room, with a window on the left of her bed. Something had happened to her in that room, it vanished as she woke, something alarming; she made an effort to forget the feeling of fear. Words floated to the surface of her mind—*with feet towards the dawn.* Ah, the old Queen, she thought easily.

Her watch was on the table. She lit the candle to see it. One o'clock. If I wake at night it's always about this time, she thought. She listened, straining her ears, to some sound that had begun when she was asleep and was now so far off it was inaudible except as a faint trembling through the web of the dark—it might be the wind, the footsteps of someone out late going through the streets to his home. Nothing. She sighed, put her candle out, and lay down.

Chapter 10

THE next year she let her husband persuade her into going a voyage. She wanted to get away, to change the monotony her life had fallen into, but she disliked leaving her children for as long as three or four months. More in doing it than when it was done. Mrs. Fisher would take the boy, and Hervey could board at the small school where she went every day, in the same street. There were no other boarders, but the two ladies who kept it would surely look after her all the better.

Her heart failed her when she left Hervey there, standing, with the elder Miss Menley, in the doorway of the empty classroom. The little girl looked stunned and stupid. She did not cry. It was impossible to tell whether she minded.

'Oh, they're happy enough; they've forgotten you in a day or two,' another captain's wife said to her. The idea was that children are like animals, they settle down in any home.

Jake, when she took him to Mrs. Fisher, walked away from her into the kitchen without looking back. Well, he's all right, she thought, half sorry. She hated to leave him fully as much as leaving Hervey, but—everyone did it—why trouble? Hardening herself, she hurried back to the house to finish her packing. Russell was coming out of the kitchen as she went in. He was wiping his moustache, he had been in there eating something. She felt a

sharp dislike of him. Why couldn't he wait for his meal, not snatch things at all hours? He would break pieces off a loaf and cram them into his mouth, and drink milk from the bowl. Like his stepmother, she thought.

'Well, got rid of the boy?' he said, smiling at her.

She trembled with hatred. 'I've left him with Mrs. Fisher, if that's what you mean,' she said.

During supper she forced herself to look at him. He was fifty-three. His hair had scarcely begun to turn grey, and it was as thick as ever; there was no trace of weakness in his body: broad-shouldered, straight, spare, it was the body of a much younger man. The skin of his neck and face was burnt, scored with lines like a leaf, but it was sound. She felt a strange warm grief, almost pity for him. Perhaps, she said to herself, this voyage will make a difference. But difference to whom? To herself? No, she would never change.

In London Russell was told that Mr. Arnold would come as far as Antwerp with the ship. Although the *Southern Star* was not the newest it was one of the most comfortable boats of the Line. He was very pleased about this. He took it as a tribute to himself and his reputation.

The captain's wife was less pleased. It meant she would have to exert herself to be friendly and talk during meals. The older she grew, the less inclined she was to take the trouble to meet strangers. She grumbled about it to her husband. His pleasure seemed to her slightly ridiculous. As if Mr. Arnold would be more than civil. She did not let herself know she was glad that she had brought all her good dresses.

John Arnold looked at her with a little curiosity when she came into the saloon the first evening. He knew who she was—and he had chosen to come on the *Southern Star*

in part because he wanted to look at her. There must be something unusual in a woman who ran away from a wealthy mother to marry an uneducated, surely boorish captain. (There were only a few people who could have told him that this was not the whole story.) He saw a woman who must, he thought, have been a remarkable beauty as a young woman. Even now, when she was over thirty, she was beautiful in a way. He was startled by it as she came in at the door, and only when he was seated opposite her did he see that her fine delicate skin had coarsened; there were lines at the side of her mouth, between her eyes; her hands and arms were too thick. These blemishes were serious enough to smudge her beauty, but not to destroy it. Arnold had paid attentions to a great many young women, and successfully avoided marrying one of them: none of them had been intelligent—he preferred looks and a fine taste in dress to a mind—he was a little put off by a suspicion that his captain's wife had a mind of her own. But he could not be with a woman as attractive as she was without trying to make himself liked by her, and he behaved himself so.

Mrs. Russell was happier than she knew to be talking to a man of her own class. Unconsciously, she ignored her husband, the other officers, and made all her remarks to Arnold. He was much more adroit, as well as more aware of himself, and he managed to give at least the impression that he was conversing with everyone at the table. It was easy to do. The other two officers made no attempt to do better than answer a direct question. The chief, sitting at the foot of the long table, resisted apparently without difficulty any impulse he may have felt to be polite to the owner and managing director of the Line. Now and then he grunted. The only person at the table who was wholly

at ease was the captain. He went on talking and talking, telling pointless stories—if they had a point it went to show what a fine cunning fellow he was. No one could deceive him. He always got the better of people, and people you'd never think he had met, the King's doctor and the like, told him their secrets. There was something disarming in his boasts, something naïve in their very dishonesty.

Mrs. Russell was ashamed of him.

He was delighted with himself. When they went back to his berth after dinner he said smiling,

'Nice fellow, Mr. Arnold.'

'Do you think so?' his wife said, in a dry voice. She was too vexed with him to join in praising Arnold. 'I think you talked too much.'

'Ha, you know nothing about it,' he said good-humouredly. 'I know how to talk to a man like Mr. Arnold. I get on well with him. Very pleasant fellow.'

Sylvia Russell could not sleep. She went over and over the evening in her mind. Had she said too much? too little? What impression had she made on him? She called him in front of her, while she scrutinised him with more care. He was little taller than she was; slight-boned, his hands and feet noticeably small; he had unusually fine eyes, of a clear vivid brown; dark hair, almost black, and sleek: he was extremely graceful and neat in his movements. How old is he? she wondered. About my age. She had noticed his hands. They were slender, with fine black hairs. She imagined them laid on her own.

At once she was displeased. What nonsense! What abject nonsense—and scarcely decent! She drove him out of her mind. But she lay awake. Her thoughts turned and tossed. Russell's noisy breathing disturbed her. When at

last she slept she dreamed that she was a girl with her mother. She awoke at five o'clock and waited impatiently for the steward bringing her cup of tea.

During the morning she heard Arnold's voice on the bridge, and her husband answering in his most affable tones. Without giving herself time to feel nervous she went out on deck. Arnold was leaning against one of the lifeboats listening to Russell. He turned, and looked at her. His glance was smiling, brilliant. It was not a polite greeting, it held her deliberately. It was as direct as an actual touch would have been.

She said, 'Good morning,' and moved past him to the deck chair waiting for her on the shady side of the chart house.

After a few minutes Russell shouted at the steward to fetch another chair. Arnold strolled over to her.

'May I stay here?'

'Please do,' she said in a slow voice.

He drew his chair near hers and began to talk about theatres and books, and when he saw she was a little bored turned quickly to talking of London. Sylvia Russell listened with half her mind. The rest was busy with the man himself. He is charming, well-bred, kind, she noticed; but is he a little weak? She scarcely knew what she meant by weak. She had no idea that she was comparing him with another shipbuilder and owner—her mother.

Her eyes sparkled, and her mouth smiled happily. The sunlight did not exaggerate her lines, it made light of them. She had not looked so well for years.

Russell was satisfied to see Arnold talking pleasantly to his wife. She did him credit, he thought.

By one way and another—always discreetly—John Arnold managed to spend the great part of his time with her. He

was surprised to find himself thinking about her when he was alone. When he saw her again his heart quickened with pleasure. He was even afraid of boring her. It had never happened before. Skilful philanderer as he was, his anxiety had always been not to be bored: and not to allow any woman to take him seriously. For the first time he was anxious to make a serious impression. Am I losing my head? he asked himself uneasily.

Sylvia Russell soon gave up thinking of herself. She thought of Arnold—with intense confusion and happiness. She had not known how starved her body was for—she did not think the words—the delicacies of love-making. She had never known that she had warm senses. She did not know it now. With a curious innocence she let her mind dwell on the physical details of their companionship. He had looked at her so. He had laid his arm near hers on the rail. He had said, 'I wish I were making the voyage with you.'

The second time he said this she said doubtfully,

'Why don't you?'

She was chilled by his answer.

'I think it might be unwise.'

Her state of mind was very confused. She did not want to know that he was thinking solemnly about her, and himself. And—if he were thinking seriously—she must despise him for thinking like a cautious man. Her shrewd irony, which had been asleep, started up. She saw herself in an undignified light. And Arnold, for all his delicacy, his genuine kindness, as a poor second-rate creature.

'Really?' she said, in biting tones. 'Unwise in what way? Are you a bad sailor?'

He touched her arm—it was the first time he had done so; she felt an extraordinary sensation, not pleasant, but

engrossing, in her body. She did not draw back from him. She felt faint.

'Don't be unkind,' Arnold said in a low voice.

'You mean,' she said recklessly, 'don't be honest. You want me to be agreeable the whole time. I haven't the patience. I might have it for a stranger, but if we are to be friends—'

She stood up abruptly—they were sitting side by side under the awning put up at one side of the cabin. She couldn't think what she had been going to say. Arnold got up. She walked away from him into the cabin.

She sat there, trembling. Her heart was beating so furiously that she became alarmed. Surely she must be ill. Her legs, when she tried to get up, would not bear her. Then she forgot to think about her body in the dismay that seized her. Why did I say that—why? I was a fool, I was mad. He must be laughing at me. He'll tell other people I'm bad-tempered and awkward.

Suddenly she imagined he had come into the cabin. She felt him there, touching her. She stretched her arms up, then let them fall on the table. She groaned.

'Fool, stupid fool.'

She had ceased trembling. Her body became locked in a feeling between despair and amusement. Yes, amusement. I am mad, she said to herself. She didn't think the word 'love'—that would have seemed ridiculous—but she felt it in her body, her senses, her head. She was burning with it.

When Russell came into the room to wash before dinner, she looked at him in a stupefied way. He was irrelevant. She could speak to him, because he had ceased to affect her in any way.

With the same feeling of unreality—she looked at her hands when she was washing them as though they were not hers—she changed her dress and brushed and replaited her hair. At the last minute, imagining that the neck of her dress was too low for board ship, she took out the Maltese scarf and put it on.

She found it easy to look at Arnold across the saloon table, and to talk to him. The emotion—half joy, half excitement—that seized her at the sight of him gave her control of herself. She could talk kindly to the young third officer, downcast because he had left his young wife in London. She even coaxed a sentence or two from the chief. Her husband watched her a little uneasily. He had not known her in this mood since the first weeks of their marriage, and he disliked it. There was something in her, something incalculable, uncontrolled, that shocked him. It all but silenced him.

At the end of dinner, she was left alone at the table with Arnold and her husband. Russell got up to go. She rose, too. As she walked to the door behind Russell, Arnold spoke to her so closely that his shoulder touched hers.

'Stay on deck,' he said in a low voice.

She felt a triumphant happiness. She glanced at him. He was not smiling: his features seemed to harden. She met his glance boldly, but she had a sense that she was throwing herself blindly down.

They walked up and down the narrow space between the lifeboat and her cabin, without speaking. At one end they came in view of the man in the wheelhouse. Russell had gone on to the upper bridge, and they heard his voice at intervals.

She began to be tired. Arnold noticed it at once, and he carried their chairs round and placed them close up to

the cabin, so that they were not overlooked. 'You will be cold,' he said.

'No.'

'Let me fetch you a coat.'

'No, no.' She disliked the idea of his going into their cabin, with its stuffy smell of tobacco and William's clothes.

Again he touched her arm. He drew it under his and held it there. The same almost anguished pleasure seized her. Abruptly, Arnold began to laugh; he laughed quietly, almost inaudibly, his head held back, his eyes brilliant. She was offended and at a loss. All her confidence that he loved her disappeared. She was shocked and wounded; she had no idea how to behave. Pulling her arm away sharply—she was too straightforward to hide the fact that she was mortified—she stared at him with frank displeasure. She had blushed scarlet.

'Oh,' he said, 'this is utterly ridiculous. You and I here, and all these'—he waved his hand—'all these dull fellows thinking of nothing at all.'

His levity bewildered her. It gave her a queer feeling of contempt for him. What was there laughable in a ship's crew doing its work? He must be mad.

'I suppose they're thinking about taking the ship up the river,' she said stiffly.

He sobered at once. He turned to her, bending his head so that she was looking closely at his delicate mouth and bright dark eyes. 'Forgive me,' he said in a coaxing voice. 'I'm off my head. I love you. Tell me that you love me. Say it. Say, I love you.'

She did not speak. It was growing dark, and the river, the distant banks with their Noah's Ark trees and scattered dolls' houses, were dissolving in a clear aqueous light; each

seemed distinct, but at the light touch of a glance melted and sank back into the half-darkness. Her thoughts seemed part of this delusive landscape; she groped among them like a blind woman. With a gleam of insight, momentary, she saw Arnold as he was—a kind shallow sentimentalist, full of fine feeling, vain, greedy. He was a sound man of business, but that did not enter into his private life, which must be singularly emotional.

He went on in a low voice. 'You're so beautiful, my darling.'

'I'm thirty-four.' Why am I telling him that? she wondered. She felt cold and tired. 'I shall go in,' she said quickly. 'I can't stay here.'

Arnold frowned and seized her wrist. 'Don't go in yet.' He spoke sharply. 'I want you, I want to talk to you.'

She freed herself and stood up. 'No, I must go.' She wanted nothing but to run away from her perplexity, disappointment, and his sudden seriousness. It had come too late; he should have been serious at first. But she was trembling when she got up, and she had to take hold of his arm. They walked like this to the door of the cabin. It was quite dark in the narrow alley between the two companionways, and without a word Arnold took her in his arms and held her so that his whole body was pressing her against the wooden wall of the cabin. She hardened herself against him for a second, then yielded, and their bodies came together in an extreme eagerness. His knees were on hers, his mouth on hers: he pulled the Maltese scarf from her neck and bent his head to the open front of her dress. Startled, she dragged herself free from him and rushed into the cabin, slamming the door.

She had one wish: to hide herself in bed. If she pre-

tended to be asleep, her husband wouldn't disturb her when he came off the bridge.

She found she was holding the strip of lace squeezed in her hand. She smoothed it out and put it away, then pulled her clothes off and got into bed. In a few minutes she fell asleep, and slept all night. She awoke only when the shouts and the noise over her head forced her to open her eyes in sunlight. The ship was making fast at the quay.

She was still lying in bed when William came in. He was smiling and rubbing his chin with his hand.

'Fine morning,' he said, 'fine sunny morning. Aren't y' going to get up now?'

'My head aches,' she said. 'Ask steward to bring me some tea and toast here. I shan't come down to breakfast.'

She did not want to face Arnold again. It was easier to lie here in a numbed state of mind, thinking of a great many trivial things. But gradually she became impatient. Her impatience became a torment, but she could not bring herself to get up and dress and run the risk of seeing him. She lay for a long time with her hands over her ears, to avoid hearing his voice.

Towards ten o'clock Russell came in fussily and told her that Mr. Arnold had gone ashore with his luggage to catch the train to Berlin. He had expected to see her, had asked after her, and he was sorry to hear she was not well. 'He seemed surprised you didn't say goodbye to him. I told him you had these headaches.'

'There was no need to tell him anything,' Mrs. Russell said coldly. 'I'm not obliged to see him.'

'Well, he's the owner,' Russell exclaimed.

'For you to see him off is quite enough,' Mrs. Russell said. She closed her eyes, to put an end to the argument.

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She could not bear her husband at this moment. His anxiety to stand well with the owner and his clumsy movements and gestures set her teeth on edge. She waited in an obstinate silence for him to go.

When he had gone she got up and began to dress rapidly. At one moment she thought she heard Arnold's voice, but it was a mistake. She pressed her hand on her throat. I won't think of him again, she said to herself steadily.

She felt almost a relief that it was over and he had gone.

Chapter 11

In a foreign city she was eager to see everything. If only she had had just a little more money, how blissfully happy she would have been! Even with a little to spend she was like a girl at a fair.

Antwerp she knew already. In time it came to stand with her for all foreignness. She went ashore on many wharves, saw many places, but, when she was old, and thought or dreamed again of being on a voyage, she was in Antwerp—always in Antwerp. Its shops were the shops of all foreign cities and she the pleased expectant buyer. The flower-women with their bright bunches in the square in front of the cathedral came freshly to her every English year with the first bunches of spring flowers. Its streets kept the strangeness and familiarity of a house lived in as a child and never revisited.

She took a cab from the quay every morning to the town. There was a bridge to cross which was sometimes closed, and she would sit looking out at the foreign houses and the faces of men and women she could never quite accept as of the same flesh as herself. They seem moulded in a different flesh by another thumb.

In town she sauntered from shop to shop, noting the prices, buying a pair of gloves, at least. Absurd to come abroad and not buy gloves. This time she bought as well a doll with a kid body for Hervey. There were no kid-bodied dolls in England.

There was a modest *pâtisserie* where she went for coffee and cakes in the middle of the day. She sat with her veil pushed back, eating and drinking slowly, to sit as long as possible. The woman of the shop remembered her; they had formed a friendship of nods and smiles. Sylvia Russell never learned more than a word or two of any foreign language; she had an incorrigibly English tongue and a fear, which she would never have admitted, of being laughed at. But Antwerp spoke to her in its own language, in the secretive front of a house, in the gestures of a passer-by, in the taste and fragrance of foreign bread; and she answered with love, serious, enduring, eager.

One day, sitting in this café, she thought she saw Arnold walking among the people at the other side of the street. Her heart began to beat at a rate that shook her; not knowing what she was doing she struck the edge of the table with her hand. The woman—they were alone in the shop—spoke to her.

'Madame est souffrante?'

She shook her head. She would have got up and gone out, to avoid the woman's curiosity, but she knew she could not stand up without tottering. A customer came in, and when she had gone the woman looked across the shop and saw the Englishwoman sitting with as composed an air as usual. Her face was even a little forbidding, and the woman thought better of the speech she had been going to make in a voice that would show how concerned she felt.

Fool, fool, Sylvia Russell was saying to herself, with a bitter contempt.

She succeeded in falling back into the apathy she was rapidly teaching herself. She would not think of Arnold. Her immense pride, and a certain indolence, came to her

help; she had suffered through him and she did not altogether forgive him for that. She wanted now to forget him; it would save so much trouble.

Paying for her cakes, she went out into the hot sun. She had, foolishly, left her sunshade on the ship. It came to her she must have a new one. At once. Impossible to keep in the shade, reminding herself to bring it tomorrow. The thought of all the objections William would raise against her buying a new one before the first was worn out made her impatient. Buy it, then let him say what he pleased. She began the long engrossing search for one which must be fashionable, and sensible—and cheap. In the end, as she always did, she paid far more than she had meant. But the silk, thick and fringed, and the slender elegant stick were irresistible. She must have it. Stifling her scruples, she paid, and came out of the shop with brilliantly flushed cheeks, carrying the sunshade in a hand that trembled with joy.

There had been plague in Vera Cruz. It was over, but they had had a hard time of it. The agent came on board to advise her against going ashore, but she would go; and at dinner that evening in the hotel—he was alone, his wife had fled during the worst to Colon—he told them about the plague. Doctors and nurses had not been able to deal with half the sick; some of them had left, afraid themselves of the plague.

'A man turned up, no one knew where he came from, he'd been starving, it seems, and offered himself to help. Help he did. The nights were as hot as the days, and no sleep, and women crying out in the night, and the people dying. He never seemed to sleep. He nursed, he watched

between a dead man and a living child. He was, I can't tell you what he was like. At the end some of us thought he ought to be thanked. We got up a subscription for him; it was, you may say, a goodish sum. We were going to give it to him in this room, and a testimonial the doctors had drawn up. Then an hour before the event he was knocked down by a cab and killed—the horse trampled on him. Eh? Queer.'

'Very queer. But what a fine fellow!' Mrs. Russell said warmly. 'Who was he?'

'A Belgian called Lengard. We found out more about him after he was dead. The police wanted him for a shooting. There were other things.'

He mouthed a word to Russell, turning his head so that she shouldn't hear it. From the crafty glance Russell gave him she knew it had been unpleasant and, offended, she got up from the table and went on to the verandah of the hotel to wait for Russell.

She felt glad Lengard was dead. His death had been a foolish one, less surprising than the weeks of courage and devotion. But why the devotion? With a moment's terror she thought, There is nothing I can be sure of. She recovered at once. It is best not to think much. Yet for an instant she had thought, What evil might I do, most to my children, punishing my mother for my mistakes, with liking only for one or two, trusting none. If my strength failed, what would become of them?

But why should I fail? She felt a pang of certainty. Lengard, that 'fine fellow,' was dead, but she, shutting the hand of her mind on her secrets, lived, felt life as firm in her as a stone.

At New Orleans they were quarantined and their clothes and bedding taken off to be disinfected. Mrs. Russell was

afraid a fur muff she had bought in Antwerp would be spoiled. She told the man she would hold him responsible. 'Have it your own way,' he said, 'we won't bother with it. If it has the plague in it you'll die. That's all.'

'Die?' she said scornfully. '*Why* should I die?'

The autumn wind blew through Danesacre. She went into her house and found that Mrs. Fisher had lit a fire and set cups and a loaf and butter on the table. There was dust everywhere, dust and cobwebs, and the floors creaking after the dry summer. She looked about her with distaste. One day I'll leave, she thought suddenly: I'll build a house.

She fetched Hervey that evening; and the next morning went over to Mrs. Fisher's for Jake. He was standing outside the house in the road. When she spoke to him he scowled and made off. She ran after him and he pushed her hand away.

'Let be,' he said fiercely.

'Why, Jake,' she said, 'I'm your mother.'

'You're not. Mammy Fisher's my mother.' He frowned at her, his brows coming down so far that his eyes all but disappeared between them and his red cheeks.

'We'll go to Mammy Fisher and ask her,' Mrs. Russell said.

He marched in front of her on short fat legs. A boy twice his size stepped hastily into the gutter to avoid him. Without glancing at his mother he hurried into Mrs. Fisher's kitchen and tried to close the door. She pushed her way in, and he turned his back on her and began clawing and scrambling to the top of an enormous pile of potatoes in a corner of the room. He rolled down, climbed

it again and rolled down again. Mrs. Fisher's voice was lifted from somewhere outside.

'Don't do it, love.'

Up Jake went again, and down he came, the potatoes clumsily rolling about the floor.

'If I give you a piece of chocolate you won't do it again, will you?' Mrs. Fisher called.

'Give me, then,' Jake said.

Mrs. Fisher came out of her scullery, wiping her hands on the apron stretched over her wide lap.

'Well, now,' she said when she saw Mrs. Russell.

'Do you always give him chocolate when he's disobedient?' Mrs. Russell asked.

"He's a good bairn,' Mrs. Fisher said in the voice that seemed to have matured in the cask of her body.

'I've come to take him home,' Mrs. Russell said.

'I shall miss him. Come, love, come and I'll wash you to go with your mother.'

Jake planted his feet apart and glared at both women. 'I'm not going with her.'

But he gave in and let her button him into his reefer jacket, and she took him home. For days after this he ran back to Mrs. Fisher's whenever he could give his mother the slip. She punished him for it.

'I'll tell Mammy Fisher of you,' he roared, weeping.

In time he got used to her again; she wouldn't let him go to Mrs. Fisher's when she could help it. It hurt her bitterly that he had forgotten her. *Had* he forgotten her? He might simply have been punishing her for leaving him.

The woman from the public house at the top of North Bank came to complain that he had fought with her son and torn his jacket off him.

'Fair tore it to ribbins, he did. And t' lad came in cry-

ing. You ought to give yon lad o' yours a good thrashing. He's a proper savage.'

'And how old is your boy?' Mrs. Russell asked coldly. She was vexed when anyone criticised one of her children. And to tell her how she must treat them—the impudence of it! She trembled with anger.

'He's nobbut nine,' the woman said boldly.

'Oh. Well, my son is just five. And if yours lets himself be beaten by a boy half his age I think nothing of him. Good day.'

She shut the door in the woman's face. Watching stealthily from the kitchen window she saw the woman going away with her tail between her legs. Insolence, she thought grimly.

Suddenly she laughed softly, like a girl. Her face changed when she became happy; her eyes clouded, and she pursed her mouth into full gentle lines.

She ran upstairs, singing. She had a clear loud voice, untrained, rather arrogant.

While she was away her sister's husband had been killed in Upper Burma. A bad business, it was. A message, warning him, ordering him to withdraw, never sent; the negligence of a superior officer. Mrs. Russell wrote her letter of condolence thinking, behind the slowly written phrases, If it had been Will, drowned, what should I feel? She was not willing to admit she would feel nothing very much. Shock, some remorse, no deep pain.

She had been at home a week and Clara came down from London to stay with her. Meeting her at the station she felt, though younger, the mild experienced contempt of a woman of the world. Clara was not in black. Her

clothes, thrown on anyhow, were unsuitable, and her face grimy from the train. She began to cry as soon as they were in the house.

'Oh, Sylvie, they killed him. Not the natives—they did it really, I know, but it wasn't their fault—what right have we to march about their country? That man, that colonel, it was his fault. They're all fools, every one of them, and they don't care. *Fools.* They've reprimanded him—as if that would bring him back—' She stamped her foot, and flung herself at her sister, clinging to her and shaking her wildly. 'Oh, what shall I do? Sylvia, tell me, tell me—what shall I do? What shall I do?'

Soothing her, bringing her warm water with a dash of florida water to sponge her face, Sylvia Russell thought, Yes, it's sad; but you're not left penniless, you have a comfortable income and you have *her* to help you. A sudden jealousy sprang in her, bitter, clawing the nerves round her heart.

'Where is the boy?' she said.

Clara looked up. 'Nicholas is at school.'

'Let's see—he's at Eton, isn't he? And Georgina?'

'She has a governess, a clever woman but I don't like her. I'm wicked—she's good as well as clever. It's only—oh, I don't know. Why need children be taught so much?'

Sylvia turned her head away. 'If you can afford Eton, and a governess,' she said drily.

She saw that she had hurt her sister and thought, But she deserves it. Then, softened by Clara's forlorn untidy face, she said awkwardly,

'Never mind, my dear. You have the children and they'll be more and more comfort to you as they grow older and sensible.'

She was thinking of herself; she was thinking of Hervey. Clara surprised her by a cynical remark.

'I don't believe it. Children think only of themselves: it's quite right, I know it's right, but it doesn't comfort me. I loved him; he was kind and we used to laugh about things together, and he didn't mind my being clumsy and knowing nothing. And now that fool got him killed and I'm alone. I know I shall get over it—as people say—don't *you* say it. But that doesn't help me. Oh, Sylvie, I'm a fool. But I did love him, and he loved me and liked living with me.'

Mrs. Russell did not answer. She seemed to be living in another country, separated from the muddled impulsive woman at her side by miles. By an age of other ways. The two of them grew up bound closely, and that memory of childhood was now all they had together. In everything else, in living, in thinking, they were strangers. And I am not less alone, she thought. Her jealousy of Clara's children persisted. Mine are as good-looking and far more intelligent, she thought. Why must they have less?

Looking out of the window she saw Hervey running along the street from school, and in a warm quick voice she said,

'Clara, here's Hervey. You'll see a change in her—she's grown. Miss Menley says she's advanced for her age. Really clever.'

Chapter 12

The next year, on her birthday, she had a letter from Arnold, and an ebony box holding a dozen handkerchiefs made of the finest lawn embroidered with her initials. They're almost too good to use, she thought. As she touched them she realised that her fingers were very rough. It vexed her newly.

Now for the letter, she thought. She was surprised that her hand trembled. He means nothing to me now, she thought, biting her lip.

The letter was short:

My dear, I should like to give you more than this trifle, if I thought you wouldn't refuse it. You won't refuse this. Do you remember I asked your birthday one evening? You may have forgotten it and forgotten me. My memories of you are clear and very dear, O ma si blanche, ô ma si froide Marguerite. Don't think I've forgotten your name, though.

John Arnold.

She tore the letter up. She was smiling, with pleasure, with something very like tenderness. It pleased her that he had taken the trouble. She was flattered. Not any less because he had chosen carefully. They were good handkerchiefs, they had cost money, but she could take them because what, after all, is a handkerchief? Even when it is a full dozen and in a valuable box.

She was busy. Birthday or no birthday, the work didn't

do itself. She hid the box at the back of a drawer in her bedroom and ran downstairs, warm and excited. The tenderness she felt for a few minutes had given way to a curious pride. Surely something splendid would happen to her now any day. She felt gay and confident, fit to dance with joy.

William's letter came on the midday post:

My darling wife, This wishes you Many Happy Returns of your Birthday. I am enclosing you £5 (five Pounds) cheque to buy yourself something as a present. Well my Dear your welcome letter to hand well I am sorry you have such hard work and trouble with the children. You should let them run wild like animals that is what they are. It doesnt do any good making a fuss of them spending money on their clothes all they want is enough to cover them never mind looks. I dont give myself trouble about clothes and none the worse off for it. Well we have had a lovely week. Sunshine all day and not hot you could walk about in comfort and a smooth sea and this morning the sun is shining and a blue sky and 60° in the shade. I am happy and in good health and the air here is beautiful coming in the berth. Well my Dear I trust you are feeling alright and get all the sunshine you can for it will be best for you both for health and happiness. Now I will close with best love and best wishes and take care of yourself.

Your loving husband WILL

W. RUSSELL.

It would be better if he did give himself trouble about his clothes, she thought. In Odessa the captains of four Star Line boats lying together were invited to dinner by the agent: the other captains dressed early and came on board the *Southern Star* to make sure Russell changed his old shabby uniform for a good one. He thought it a great joke, but his wife was very much put out.

She felt a familiar impatience and remorse. She must thank him for sending the money, but why should he accompany it with nonsense about the children? He spoils everything, she thought, with a flash of anger. She felt a little sorry he had given her the money. And yet ashamed to be so little pleased with him.

His letter had let her down from her high spirits. She went about her work with lips pressed together and a mournful air. What out-of-the-way thing could happen to her, the wife of an obscure captain, living in an obscure port?

Why could she not let William go his own way, and go hers? In the first place she was his wife, and husband and wife must share a room, must live, outwardly at least, on terms. Had he been home all the time she might perhaps—only perhaps—have grown used to him. But in the months he was away at sea she was master of herself and the house; his coming home was an invasion. Beside that she was never a patient woman, never easy. Certain things she always hated in him, that he told lies, boasted, grudged her and the children any pleasure of their lives, she said. She would never compromise. With each voyage he spent away she grew more to herself. Before he came back she would make resolutions to smooth things. A day, two days, and he vexed her by one of his mean speeches—and she felt he was not worth trouble. She felt she lowered herself by trying to be gentle, and her tongue, her quick tongue, flashed out at him. If he answered her roughly or was sullen she couldn't bear him, and it was days before she forgave him.

He would have bullied his children if she had let him.

Not out of ill will but because he thought it did a child good to be shouted at. He wanted them to run like dogs or apprentices when he raised his voice. If they had seemed afraid of him he would have liked them well enough: side by side with his hectoring ways he had a curious patience and gentleness. But his wife refused with anger to let him order them about.

'What is it you want?' she would say coldly, coming into the room with a sharp gesture when he had thought her upstairs.

'I want my boots,' Russell growled. 'Where is that boy? Why can't he answer?'

'He's playing in the yard. There's no need to shout the place down. Your boots are where you left them—in the kitchen.'

'Ha, I don't see why the boy can't make himself useful now and then.'

'If you want things done for you you could ask like a reasonable being. Why bring the boy into the house simply to get your boots?'

Russell would stump angrily to fetch his own boots. Sometimes he was clumsily sarcastic. Or he muttered something about his hard life, 'slaving at sea,' or his hard childhood. His wife couldn't bear him when he pitied himself; she cut him short with a dry ruthless phrase. Then he was hurt and sulked.

He was not wanted in the house. At times his wife realised it. But it's his own doing, she thought quickly: if he were more pleasant, if instead of grudging us things he was eager to enjoy life when he came home. But he grumbles, he whines; if I allowed it he'd ride roughshod over everything. And I won't have it, she thought. He shan't.

The truth was—perhaps she couldn't see it—she brought out the worst in him. Just as he brought out the most domineering, obstinate side of her nature. She would never make things easy for him; she would never give way to him. When he was away she could admit his good qualities. She even sometimes wished for him. He came, and it was the same story over again. Who knows the truth about any marriage—as about any death?

His faults were the very ones she would despise. She never lied; she was eager and generous. Never in this world could she have understood him. When did he begin to hide behind his lies? Before he was an apprentice, pulling his sleeves down to cover sore wrists, blubbering with cold and the rest? Probably before. But that time drove him in on himself. There is no need for a ship's master to tell lies, but when William Russell comes to die it is likely the last sound he hears where he is wandering in his mind will be a harsh-voiced 'Hey, boy!' He was thirty-seven when he married: had Sylvia Hervey been kinder and wiser than she was he couldn't have been changed. He had an imagination, and it borrowed ludicrous shapes to find expression.

She was disappointed. And she was not a mind to be thankful for second-best. She had the narrowness and the depth of a river in hard ground. She had very much to give, and it was largely wasted . . . so much gaiety, energy, courage.

When Captain Russell came home that autumn he was scarcely in the house before he began telling her about his latest grievance. He never asked after the children, who were in bed; it was evening when he came. As soon

as he had eaten, and without even washing his hands, he sat down to draft his letter to the office.

'Why not wait until you see Mr. Arnold?' his wife said. She thought they must laugh at his rambling letters in the office, and it vexed her for him.

But no, he would write. And then for two days he was irritable and nervous, expecting an answer by every post. He was out when it came. Mrs. Russell laid the letter on the dining-room table and went into the kitchen. She came back in time to catch sight of him scurrying upstairs with the letter, unopened, in his hand. He's afraid, she thought. Then why had he written—unless out of vanity?

He hurried down again in less than two minutes—smiling.

'Ha, I settled that fellow in New York.'

'Oh, did you?' his wife said drily.

Arnold had written the letter himself. She read it with a mixture of curiosity and shame. She imagined that Arnold had amused himself writing it.

Dear Sir,

I can quite understand that the supervision which was exercised over you in New York by Messrs. T. T. & Y. (which under any circumstances seems to have been somewhat arbitrary) would be annoying to you. In explanation to some extent of their action I would point out to you that there are Masters and Masters. Many of these in the employ I have every confidence in and am perfectly satisfied of their straightforwardness and integrity. Unfortunately I cannot speak thus decidedly of all; hence a certain amount of restriction has to be placed upon their action in ports where the Star Line has regular agents. You are a stranger to Messrs. T. T. & Y. never having been in to them before and consequently they not being aware that you were one of my confidential Captains, have seemingly thought it necessary to follow you closely. They will not have

found from experience what I have found and I have no doubt that should you ever return to New York things will work more smoothly.

Yours truly

JOHN ARNOLD.

'He wouldn't have taken so much trouble if he didn't think fairly highly of you,' she said, slowly.

She was surprised to find herself forced to think this. But it must be true. Arnold and the men in the office might laugh at him and his uncouth ways, but they respected him as a captain.

It makes very little difference to me, she thought, sighing.

The night he came home they had quarrelled. While he was away she had sold the bed and other pieces in their room and bought old finely marked mahogany in their place. He went up with his bag after he had written his letter, and came down looking black.

'Where ha' you put th' furniture?' he said.

She looked at him. 'What furniture?'

'Why, the bed and the other things out o' the bedroom.'

'Where do you think they are?' she said in a provoking voice.

'They're not in th' house, I know that.'

'No—they're not. I sent them to the sale room when I bought the others. I bought them at old Miss Waley's sale; she had some good things and they fetched very poor prices.'

She told him the whole thing in the hope he would reconcile himself to it, and not have a quarrel on his first night in the house. She had known he would be vexed. But she wouldn't try to soften him. Why should he mind my

selling poor stuff and buying good, for the same money? she thought, stubborn, wilfully refusing to admit him a right to be annoyed.

'They were m' mother's things,' he snapped.

'That doesn't make them good,' she said, unyielding. She knew he had no feeling for his own mother: he had never known her.

'You'd no right to sell them,' he said, suddenly shouting at her. 'Them things were mine, I tell you.'

She felt herself harden towards him. If he would only, she said to herself, discuss things in a reasonable way, not shouting and bad-tempered. She had felt harder towards him since the scene with Arnold: it was not that she compared the two men; but the thought, buried in her mind, that she was attractive to another man, gave her a new indifference. It would easily break down if he were to be very unpleasant.

'Yes, I know they were yours,' she said coldly. 'But it is I who have to live with them; eleven months out of the year you're not here. Any decent sensible man would be delighted by improvements in his house. However, I warn you, if I don't like a thing I won't keep it a minute after I can replace it. In this house I'm mistress. I'd rather clear out altogether than live with things I don't like.'

'Why, where would you go?' Russell jeered.

'I'd find somewhere,' she said in a voice, harsh, loud, strong. It intimidated him in spite of himself. He tore out of the room, and she heard him go upstairs and begin getting ready for bed. He made a great deal of unnecessary noise. He was hoping she would complain.

She sat alone in the sitting-room, by the fire. Nay, I can't bear it, she thought.

She wouldn't go up and sleep in the same bed with him.

Waiting an hour until she thought he might be asleep she crept upstairs and got a blanket out of the camphor chest, and wrapped herself in it on a chair in the sitting-room.

She slept badly. As soon as it came light she went into the kitchen, washed, and made herself tea. Carrying it into the other room she stood sipping it and looking into the garden, now lying under the power of light. The tree at the foot of the garden showed through its leaves a silence that was the pure colour of the sky, and the clouds arranging themselves calmly. What a silence! It made off then, startled by the noises of the harbour.

She felt a gaiety in all her limbs. Happiness was in the dust on the window-ledge, in the torn fringe of the rug, in her finger-tips, in the feathers, scandalously puffed out, of a bird in the garden.

The idea came to her to turn out this room and the kitchen, the day's work, at once, and prepare a cold meal to take on the moors. If she hurried they could be out there by noon.

She flew round. At eight o'clock Russell came downstairs. She called to him from the scullery.

'It's a lovely morning, Will. Let's hurry and go up to the moors. Jake can go to Mammy Fisher's—it's too far for him to walk.'

She turned round, smiling and flushed. He was standing glowering at her with a sullen face, bleakly closed against her. She felt it like a blow in the face.

She was dismayed. In her eagerness to forgive him for last night, she had forgotten he would be mortally offended at sleeping alone. She had only been thinking of herself when she slept downstairs.

'It's no day for a walk,' he said shortly.

'Why not?' she said.

'It'll rain this afternoon,' he snapped. He turned his back on her and hurried out of the room.

She watched him going, in stocking feet, his hair sticking up at the back of his head. She regretted what she had done. He's being childish, she thought; she was sorry for him.

'Will!' she called.

He pretended not to hear.

During breakfast he sat half turned from the table, eating morosely and noisily. He gobbled his food, deliberately making as much noise as possible.

Mrs. Russell bore it as long as she could—she was still hoping some of the morning could be saved—then began to clear the table. Russell glanced up at that.

'I ha'n't finished.'

'You must finish alone, I can't wait,' she answered.

She felt impatient with him now, and when, from the top of the house, she heard him shouting at the children, she was seized by a frenzied irritation. She started to go downstairs, but she heard the front door bang shut, and hurrying to a window saw him open the gate and off down the street towards the town. No moors for us this morning, she thought. She felt an extreme bitterness. And then disappointment. She felt tired and flat, and sat down to think about it.

Disappointment overwhelmed her suddenly. One thought possessed her—that she had wanted to go on the moors and now couldn't. She thought fleetingly of going alone with Hervey: but that was not what she had planned. And since her day had been wrecked it must be wrecked thoroughly—and by him. Not only her day, her life. He ruined everything—always. Selfish, mean-spirited, sullen, he took a delight in spoiling her life.

She got up and began to go about her work like a tired woman. He came in at one o'clock, cheerful—he had walked off his anger—and said amiably,

'Well, the rain's gone over—if you want to go to th' moors.'

'It's too late,' she said briefly. 'The best of the day's gone.'

She felt tears coming into her eyes as she said it, tears of pity for herself and her disappointment. She jumped up from the table and ran upstairs to her bedroom and locked the door. Throwing herself on the bed she cried heartbrokenly. Never had she been so wretched, never, never.

Voices and footsteps downstairs. They were clearing the things away. Never even to ask me if I wanted anything, she thought. Russell's voice outside the door startled her. He had come noiselessly upstairs.

'Aren't you coming down?' he said, clearing his throat.

She didn't answer.

'S'll I bring you a bit up on a tray?'

This time she could not answer; the words hardened in her throat. She was clenched in her self-pity and against him. If she had wished to give in she could not. He had not said enough to release her: he had not said, I was wrong and you were right.

He went away. Now it seemed there was a column of grief in her, her bones become hard grief, its point in her throat. Tears poured from her. She couldn't check them; she was past all. She wanted comfort, and from him. But he was too weak, too selfish, to help her.

She heard the clock chime downstairs. Two o'clock. A sudden furious restlessness seized her. I must get out, she said to herself. The house had become unendurable.

Sponging her face in cold water from the jug, she put her coat on and hurried downstairs. Hervey was sitting in the kitchen, reading. She got up and came towards her mother with a sly anxious face. Ignoring her, Mrs. Russell snatched open the scullery door. William was there, staring through the small window into the yard; he was smoking and filling the room with a pungent cloud of smoke.

'I'm going,' she said passionately, 'leaving. I shan't come back.'

She left the house and hurried along the street to the lane at the end of the street, walking between hedges and a wall covered with moss, then between fields. The road was steadily uphill. There were gulls in the lean fields. The hills at the other side of the valley were dissolving in a violet juice, pressed under the whole weight of the sky.

She began to walk more slowly. Her grief was assuaged by the silence and the delight of space, and she could see the line of the moor.

There was a corner and a pond and three roads meeting. She paused here to look round her. Looking back she saw a small figure about three hundred yards behind her on the road.

It was Hervey.

The child loitered, and came on slowly. Mrs. Russell waited for her.

'What do you want?'

Hervey stared at her without any expression in her eyes. They were as stolid as her face.

'I'm coming with you.'

'You can't,' her mother said, quickly, 'I'm going too far for you, you must go home.'

'But I can come anywhere, I shan't get tired, I can walk.'

'No, go home.'

She was comforted and touched by the little girl's concern. She must have had to run now and then to keep up. They had been walking together for over an hour, one some hundred yards in front of the other. Mrs. Russell half smiled.

Hervey smiled at once. 'I'll walk behind you, I won't speak,' she said eagerly.

'No, you must go home. I'll come back after a time.'

'When?'

'After a time.'

'I'll wait here for you.'

'No,' Mrs. Russell said sharply. 'I'll come home this evening—if you go at once. Go straight back.'

She watched Hervey plodding down the road; she walked with her head thrust forward ungracefully. Mrs. Russell felt a pang of grief and pity. She'll walk on so many roads, all over the earth, and I shan't see, she thought. She checked an impulse to hurry after her down the road—it was a good three miles home. I'm not ready to go yet, she thought lightly.

But she had had enough. She lingered for another hour, watching a man cut down an elm near a farmhouse. It's an autumn sound, she thought; the sound of leaving: and it seemed to her that something was taking leave of her in these long minutes with the sound of a branch falling.

Hervey didn't show any pleasure when her mother came into the house, nor any further concern. How little they really feel at her age, Mrs. Russell thought. (Hervey was nine.) She would have been surprised, she would have refused to believe it, if anyone had said to her, You have been seeking a mother in your own daughter. And in the end what you have done is that you have made her afraid, not any shapeless fear but the fear of losing you. It will

never leave her, it will grow with her, its roots at last squeezing among and clutching the roots of her life. To separate them will be hard and bitter agony for her, which a time cannot redeem.

After the success of his letter to Arnold, Captain Russell began talking about a shore job. He didn't look his age, but he was fifty-four, one of the senior captains with the firm. A captain some years younger had been made superintendent in Newcastle. Russell pretended to have been told he was no good.

'It's not a job for a man without any experience. That fellow Brand, he doesn't know the tricks some masters are up to. He's being cheated right and left. John Arnold will find out, then he'll have to give the place to a more experienced man. You'll see."

'It's certainly time they gave you a shore job,' Sylvia Russell said briefly.

He'll never get one, she was thinking. The balderdash he talks to them in the office. His shabby clothes. He kept good uniforms in his drawer and wore the dirtiest, oldest uniform he possessed, the one he wore on deck, to go to the office in. He thought it impressed them with his virtues. Actually all it does is make them think he isn't fit for a shore post, she thought. But it's no use talking to him about it. He was offended if she tried to advise him about such things.

My word, she said to herself passionately, if it had been me I would have had a job on shore by now.

She was measuring herself not against Russell but against her mother.

It was hidden from her how often she measured herself

against that formidable woman. Clara, only, knew that her voice, when she was angry, was their mother's. And Clara, wincing at it, recognised a way of laughing, short, contemptuous, harsh enough to take the skin off your mind. Who would have believed it lived in the same throat with the fresh chuckling laugh of a girl?

Well, so she must have a better house. She began to save for it. She persuaded Russell to pay his commissions into a separate account at the bank, not to be touched. She knew already where she would build, on the west cliff, very close the sea. It was a part would soon be the fashionable part of Danesacre, and couldn't be overlaid by any growth of the little town.

In the meantime she searched the antique shops in the towns for bargains, and bid at sales of old furniture. If there were a chair or table resembled one in her mother's large house near Middlesbrough, it was a life-and-death matter to her to have. Her mind clenched on it, she would sit through a day's auction waiting until it was put up. Then, her cheeks flushed and brilliant, she bid. A pure triumph when she could buy it! The two men who lifted the pieces onto the table knew her and would look at her with sympathy when she was outbid. Once to her horror, when she had bid her last figure, one of these men, James Peirson, sang out,

'Ah'm sorry t' say this chair has a crack i' t' leg.'

There were no more bids.

The auctioneer glanced down at her. 'Yours, Mrs. Russell.'

She had been going to say, 'Oh, but I don't want it if it's cracked,' but she was too agitated to get the words out in time. In an agony of disappointment she went round

to the back of the room. All that money gone on a rotten thing. She was looking the chair over when Peirson hurried across to her.

'Where is the crack?' she said anxiously.

'Why, ah thowt a' was cracked, but a's not. See?'

He gave her a sharp glance and made off.

With her voice—it could be forbidding—she had a natural authority. No tradesman put her off with poor stuff. She knew she was respected in the shops. She would have been surprised to learn she was liked, it never entering her head to wonder what people thought of her; or if they thought at all.

This winter she engaged a new servant. Mrs. Fisher recommended Peirson's niece Catherine, an experienced woman of twenty-five. Until now Mrs. Russell had only had young girls, and she was not sure how it would work having a woman in the house. She might have her own ways of doing things.

'If she comes,' she told Mrs. Fisher, 'she'll have to do things my way. Or go.'

'Now, now, you'll find her a good biddable sort,' Mrs. Fisher said.

Catherine came. She was a short thick-made young woman, no figure, eyes with black pupils seeming more solid than others, as if curdled. Mrs. Russell spoke shortly and kindly to her.

'You must listen to what I tell you, and try to remember it. And if you're not sure about anything, ask me. I like things done *right.*'

'Yes'm,' Catherine Peirson said. She had a deep voice, roughened, like a foot slodging along the ground.

She set to work at once. Come, that's not so bad, Mrs.

Russell thought. But she would not relax too quickly. She kept a sharp eye on the young woman this first day, now and then putting in a word.

'Get well into the corners, Catherine.'

Without looking up Catherine replied, 'Yes'm, I am.'

'That's a good thing,' Mrs. Russell said, in an energetic voice.

She held herself back from praising the girl, but when Catherine was going home that night she smiled at her, and said lightly,

'I shall see you in the morning, then, Catherine.'

She was already pleased with her, but it would never do to tell her so yet. She must be tried in all ways, and praised sparingly when at all.

The next morning when she went into the shop Mrs. Fisher asked her,

'Well, how's that girl making out?'

'Oh—well enough,' Mrs. Russell said, offhand with her. 'I think she'll do.'

Mrs. Fisher was not taken in. 'Them Peirsons are all good workers," she said in that shrewd biting voice the kindest Danesacre women can use when they please. 'Well, I'm glad you're suited.'

Chapter 13

In these middle years of her life she was restless. Spring when it came gave memories of her first youth and scored them with new grief. With her youth hopes were leaving her. But what had she hoped? That a miracle would give her back what she had destroyed? That a door, once slammed in her mother's face, would reopen of its own accord? That unanswered letters would be renewed? No, it was more she had hoped.

She had hoped that life would always open to her, with new roads, a horizon ever new, new wharves, and she, eager and unburdened, leave them behind her when she drove towards an Antwerp sunlit with no great heat, with an unexplicable happiness under the awnings of shops, the squares with the flowers. She hoped, with what unconsidered passion, for such a life as no captain's wife, living and to die in a small coast town, could have, could ever have had.

This spring—she was thirty-six—the days, opening in a clear light and closing with long golden flames from the sun devouring the fishermen's houses on the east side, troubled her with thoughts of loss. My life is running out uselessly, she thought. She disliked her house. Half awake at night she would think that such a room would look better if she arranged the furniture another way. Directly after breakfast she set to changing it round, dragging at heavy pieces in a rage of impatience. She would have run

at them with her forehead if there had been no other way of shifting them. Catherine Peirson helped silently.

'Do you think it looks better?' Mrs. Russell said.

'Yes'm, I do.'

'No, no, it's wrong,' Mrs. Russell exclaimed. 'We must put it back.'

'Very well.'

Her children irritated her these days. They seemed noisy and disobedient beyond bearing. She was always punishing them but it seemed to do them no good. If she took them to church they disgraced her afterwards by running through the streets past staid church-clad walkers. She looked at them with piercingly angry eyes and said,

'I shall punish you when we get home.'

They knew what this meant. She was able to send out a current of anxiety and tension that gave them a shock of terror. It might be an hour before they were home, but she kept her anger during this time. As soon as they got in she sent Hervey into the passage for the Malacca stick in the corner. To put off their pains for a minute first one child, then the other, asked to go to the closet.

This was a long whitewashed room on the ground floor. A small window looked onto the yard, and a branch or two of ivy crossed it. Hervey used to stand under the window and finger the glossy leaves she could just reach by standing at her greatest height: for the rest of her life the rough scent of ivy rising from the slippery leaves and stem brought her an acute sense of danger, she felt afraid and at the same time longing seized her to be once more in the house in Danesacre, even with the Malacca stick hanging over her; if it were the price of a return there she would pay it.

A Malacca cane stings without bruising. It raised long

welts on their skin. Jake cried silently, the tears running over his red cheeks. Hervey gave way after the first stroke to a mad terror; she roared and struggled, and her mother had to strike at her until she was exhausted. She was whipped oftener than Jake. Mrs. Russell had forbidden her to read before breakfast—she read endlessly and it vexed her mother to see her doing other things with her eyes clapped all the time in a book. In spite of being forbidden to do it she hid books under her mattress. Day after day Mrs. Russell found them there when she made the bed. She made Hervey take the books away, and thrashed her; and the next morning she found another under the mattress, and thrashed her again. How could any child be so blindly, stupidly wilful? She was never openly defiant. It seemed the temptation to read was so strong she forgot the thrashing she would get. It drove Mrs. Russell out of her mind.

One day when she had whipped Hervey she shut her in her room, first looking round to see that there were no books anywhere. She went out to the town. Coming back, she glanced up at the window of Hervey's room and saw her face pressed against the glass. She was at the top of the house, too far to see what look she had. But something in the pose—too rigid for a ten-year-old child—struck Mrs. Russell in the heart. She went upstairs and unlocked the door quietly.

Hervey started round. Her face in that moment had a sorrow a child could not possibly have felt, it was too deep and cunning. A grown woman waiting behind the bones of the child had stepped forward for a moment. She withdrew so quickly that Mrs. Russell confused her with the child. Who looked at her with a passive face.

I left her too long.

'Well, are you sorry?' she said gently.

Hervey turned very red. 'Yes.'

'And you'll try to be better, a better girl?'

'Yes.'

'Well, you can come down now and help me to get the tea.'

She stooped to kiss the child. Hervey's body, shaken by her tears, knocked against her; her mouth and hands were cold.

'There, there,' Mrs. Russell said tenderly, 'don't cry any more. It's enough.'

She stroked the child's hair, and felt the cheek turned to her hand. A troubled joy filled her. When she went downstairs Hervey followed her closely; she was already herself, but subdued, eager to please her mother.

Mrs. Russell did not know why for a short time she felt safe. As though she had punished in the little girl some fault, some bitter fault, which threatened her own life. And in comforting Hervey, in forgiving, it was herself she comforted.

If they were not reconciled until night she might take Hervey into her bed. The child arched her thin back like a cat's to press it against her body. She had a name only used here—'Hozzhie.'

'Go to sleep, Hozzhie.'

'I am asleep.'

Weighted with sleep, the little girl's voice dropped off into a whisper. Then in the dark room Mrs. Russell lay alone, with this morsel of life under her hand.

She had more memories than if she were an old woman. At one time she used to sleep well, but lately the first hours after she lay down were the least restful of all. Unused to sustained thought, her mind strayed like a lost animal

among the images that nourished her life. Those nearest her in time were also the least precise. They fell one on the other like ears of wheat bent by a wind: smell of damp sheets under the iron; the folding and unfolding of blankets over a child's sleeping body; sunlight torn into a million pieces scattered over the sea; the figure, already smudged and insubstantial, of John Arnold, poised in the darkness with arms rigid against his side, his eyes brilliant, smiling—nothing, she thought vaguely, he is nothing, almost ridiculous; streets, rooms, shops, so well used to her it was impossible they would exist after she died: and at the thought of death she drew back, as from the edge of a gulf, and laid her arm completely across the child's yielding body. This arm was heavy for the child to bear; even in sleep she stirred under it a little restlessly.

Now, a step or two nearer sleep, Sylvia Russell's mind skirted the edge of a region it avoided, as people avoid some place in which they have suffered too much—or even where they have been too happy. The weeks after she met Rupert Ling, to the day, already dissolving in its own bitterness, when she saw him, the last time, in a hotel room in Dieppe, had become colourless and distorted in her memory, like the landscape of a dream. She refused to go back there. Her mind ran from the shores of this country always hidden in a fog, as a ship stands out from a coast of rocks and treacherous currents.

'No,' she said aloud.

She drew Hervey closer, and felt the thin shoulder-blades against her flesh.

She closed her eyes. Images from her girlhood were rising about her. They had the brightness, the precise and untruthful clarity of a leaf seen under water in sunlight. Each was so clear it stabbed through the eye of the mind,

yet it was false. . . . She remembered an evening in her mother's house when, for some reason, she climbed onto the back of a couch and stood there, singing; she even recalled the words:

> For I can bake and I can brew
> And I can make an Irish stew
> And wash a shirt and iron it too
> But I must go out on Sundays. . . .

She seemed to be alone in the long room, the chandeliers covered like the branches of a magnolia tree with their lights, the windows . . . she heard her own voice ringing in her head, and saw her mother's face; the road leads across the moor past a ditch filled with creeping plants, yellow, silky to the touch; and then the sea, the line of foam, and the unseen hand stroking her body.

Chapter 14

She had a clear strong voice. Her children thought it beautiful.

This spring she bought a piano. She had meant to buy one at some time, but she was seized by one of those uncontrollable desires, possessing all her senses at once. She went in, one sunny morning, to try over the half-dozen cottage pianos in the shop in Saxon Street. The impulse halted her when she was passing the shop; she gave herself no time to reflect.

Two pleased her more than the rest. They couldn't be compared, since one, the Broadwood, had a sweet muted tone, and the Collard sent out notes like a strong bell.

'Nay, I can't decide,' she said at last.

'Well, now, look here, Mrs. Russell,' said the man, anxious, 'I'll send you the Broadwood to try in your room for a couple of days, then we'll fetch it and bring you the other. You can choose.'

She kept the Collard. She talked it over with Hervey a dozen times, and the little girl, no judge, stood tense and anxious trying to guess which of the two her mother wanted. She would then press that. Already she was adept of the trick of guessing unspoken desires. It was a hard training she had.

So now Mrs. Russell sang at the piano for them. They stood Hervey on her right and Jake on her left, listening, as children do, to something under the music. Jake's face,

a clumsy copy of hers, had no expression; his eyes, a pale cold blue, were fixed, and his too full lips slightly pursed: with its staring colour his face was like the figurehead of a small ship.

Such songs. In a voice brisk with interest, she sang,

'Please give me a penny, sir,
My mother dear is dead . . .'

Songs just as worthless, which, as she sang them, took from her, as if without her knowing it, a slow lamenting power. So that they sunk themselves in the memory of one of her children: long after she had forgotten all but one or two of the words, the air itself slept in her mind, so lightly that a touch roused it and with it the voice, the room, shabby but not a copy of other rooms, the horsehair couch with ends like the prow of a ship, and the sun, reflected from the other side of the street, the side facing west, lending a weak flame to two empty brass candlesticks fastened on the front of the piano.

'I'm tired now . . .'

Certain songs called out the full power of her voice. She gave it deliberately to them, as though she were lifting her arms. The sound took her as the swell of the sea takes a sailing-ship; she responded firmly, her head swaying on the strong shapely neck, her fingers striking down on the keys like a light hammer.

'White wings, they never grow weary,
They carry me cheerily over the sea;
Night comes, I long for my dearie—
I'll spread out my white wings and sail home to thee.'

One day Hervey ran into the house, wildly excited, and asked if she might go on a picnic with some children and their mother. Mrs. Russell had meant going with her a long walk that afternoon. She would not say so directly. She said,

'But, Hervey, you don't want to leave me alone on your only holiday afternoon, do you?'

Hervey felt uncomfortable. 'It's only this once, and I shall be at home in the evening,' she said anxiously.

'I shall be alone all the afternoon.'

'We could go out this evening,' her daughter said.

'It's not the same thing; the sun will have gone then.'

Still Hervey hesitated. Her face was puzzled as she looked at her mother. She could not give up the picnic, but the thought of her mother sitting alone and disappointed in the house pierced her heart. After a moment she said,

'Very well, I won't go, we'll go for a walk.'

She spoke in a cheerful voice, so that her mother would be pleased with her. And although she was bitterly disappointed her heart felt lighter.

They set off to walk along the east cliff, walking along the street squeezed between the harbour and the cliff heavy and buzzing with a swarm of old houses; climbed the hundred and ninety-nine steps to the church on the cliff edge; and walked along these bald cliffs of shorn grass, where a rail, only of wood, rotting and cracked, protected the crumbling edge. Here, lifted two or three hundred feet above the sea, with the immense sky swinging, swelled by the wind, in front of them, Mrs. Russell was happy.

'It's splendid up here,' she said. 'I'm sure this is one of the places I shall come back to when I'm dead and gone.'

'How old are you now?' Hervey asked.

'Never mind,' her mother said gaily, 'it's no business of a little girl's.'

'But I want to know how long you're going to live.'

'Oh, a long time yet,' Mrs. Russell said.

Hervey had to be content with that. But the fear of change, of loss, possessed her bones, her mind. Her mind put out roots everywhere, to fasten round anything she thought she possessed. Round the heavy book of Japanese views (it came to her mother from another captain's wife), its mountains smoking with long threads of water, the fantasticated houses, the faint strange landscapes; round the model of a Chinese house woven from yellowed rushes; round the feathers, green, red, white, of a shuttlecock; round the ostrich eggs, polished, strong, the colour of ivory, onto which she was allowed to copy in oil-paints the birds and flowers from a coloured book of birds.

She admired these things with a passion deepened by her fear of losing them. It was the overflow of a deeper, less conscious fear. One day Mrs. Russell told her to come after school to a certain shop and wait there for her. Hervey mistook the shop: as the minutes passed she stood there frozen into an immobility of terror. She couldn't move to go to the shop door to look out. It was only by accident her mother saw her there.

Mrs. Russell teased her, and was put out when Hervey began to cry and cried herself into a fever. She hadn't a notion of the way in which her life had penetrated her child's. She did not know what she had done.

Going into the yard one morning she found her ashpit crammed up with an old rug. She pulled it out. Ashes

flew up and choked her. Furious and disgusted she ran back into the house calling,

'Catherine, Catherine, what is this in the ashpit? When did it get there?'

'It's Mrs. Edward Russell's,' Catherine said, with a faint air of malice. 'Her girl was pushing it in from the street when I came this morning.'

'Why didn't you tell me at once?' Mrs. Russell asked sharply.

'I thought perhaps you'd told her she could put it in.'

'As if I should!'

She was vexed. She knew perfectly well that Catherine had not thought anything of the sort. But the friendship —it was almost that—between servant and mistress was not so compelling as Catherine's distrust of all mistresses. If there were trouble she would keep out.

A month ago her mother-in-law had moved from Rope Terrace to the next-door house, and now Mrs. Russell couldn't go out of her own house without being spied on from the yellow Nottingham curtains of Mrs. Edward's sitting-room. It made her angry, but she could do nothing about it.

She sent Catherine to return the rug to Mrs. Edward's yard, and as soon as she was ready to go into the town she went in next door.

A gust of sour air met her when she stepped into the passage. It had not taken the old woman a week to surround herself with the same smells, of caraway, musty wine, and a decaying female body. Wrinkling her nose, Mrs. Russell marched into the sitting-room. Mrs. Edward was sitting in her chair by the fire, doing nothing—she never did anything—her hands clawed together in her lap and her eyes looking out as if from among stones. One

could see nothing behind them. She was sixty-five now, as dry and shrunken as an old root, alive with a little spite. Her hair was still black.

'Oh, it's you, is it?' she said. 'Come in. Ha' y' come for a sup of Madeira? I've getten some from Newcastle.'

'No, I've not come for anything of the sort,' Mrs. Russell said, striking her blow at once. 'I've come to find out why you told your girl to throw a filthy rug in my ash-pit.'

Mrs. Edward's eyes shifted without flickering. 'What rug? I know naught about any rug.'

'Oh, yes, you do,' Mrs. Russell retorted. 'Or your girl does. It's in your yard now. Perhaps you'll see to get rid of it some other way.'

'I've thrown out no rug,' Mrs. Edward said. She would deny if it was her last word. Lifting her head, she said slyly,

'And how's Will? Ha' y' heard from him lately? He says you're thinking of building. You've getten some money, then, from somewhere? It'll be from your mother, I suppose.'

Mrs. Russell swallowed her anger. She was angry with William for not holding his tongue. Now the old woman would pry and question day after day.

'Will is in no position to build houses,' she said coldly.

Mrs. Edward lowered her eyelids, flat, clinging inwards over the sunken eyes. She feared the younger woman and respected her—the only person she ever respected in her life.

Glancing from the window Mrs. Russell saw her children in the street. Hervey was egging her brother on to throw stones at a dog trotting amiably on its business. She

knocked on the window and beckoned them in. They came sheepishly.

She turned on them her anger against Russell. It was not the first time Hervey had encouraged Jake in mischief. There was something in Hervey the mother did not like—an almost impersonal malice. She seemed to incite her brother to evil to see what would happen to him.

'I shall whip you both when I come in from the town,' she said, 'and you most, Hervey, because it was your fault.'

They stood in front of her with blank stolid faces. In a coaxing voice Mrs. Edward said,

'Nay, let them off this time, Sylvia. They're only bairns.'

'They're old enough to know what they're doing,' Mrs. Russell said. But something in the movement of Hervey's hands touched her. 'Very well, since you ask,' she said.

The old woman got up and went over to the sideboard, still bent forward; she sat so long she found it difficult to straighten her back now. She brought out a dry seed-cake and gave both children a slice, and a penny. 'Here's your Saturday money,' she said.

'It's Friday,' Hervey blurted.

'Then don't come touring in here for it tomorrow.' . . .

About eight o'clock in the evening when Catherine Peirson was going home, she saw the rug sticking half outside the door opening from the ashpit to the street. They were all emptied from outside, a row of doors in the wall. This time she went back and told Mrs. Russell.

Mrs. Russell had been resting. She started up, trying to make her voice steady, but her anger suffocated her.

'What did you say, Catherine? Are you sure?'

'You can look for yourself, 'm,' Catherine said calmly.

'Take it and throw it into the road,' Mrs. Russell said.

She went straight to her mother-in-law's house and found her sitting at the table in front of a nearly empty bottle of the Madeira. She was tipsy. As soon as she saw Mrs. Russell she said in a truculent voice,

'If you've come here again about yon trumpery rug, you may hold y'r tongue.'

For some reason she had taken the globe off the gas, and the naked flame hissed over the table, and every few minutes another moth flew in through a window open an inch or so behind the blind and into the flame.

'Dies, dies, dies,' she chanted, 'and no resurrection morn, no, no, no, no, no. And I'll tell you what,' she said to Mrs. Russell, 'you'll creep at the last. Yes, you, too!'

Mrs. Russell turned to go away. 'It's no use my talking to you when you're in this state,' she said quietly.

She heard the old woman scrambling to her feet but did not look round. She was thrown off her balance by the sudden weight of Mrs. Edward's body. She stumbled, and saved herself, then seized the old woman's arms and jerked her onto the sofa. She was so disgusted by her she could have drowned her without regret. Then she went away, trembling. That *I* should have to do with these people, she thought.

Three days later when she was going past the window, Mrs. Edward beckoned her to come in. She went in.

'Well?' she said, coldly.

'Why, I thought you'd mebbe like these,' the old woman said in a subdued voice. She pointed at a silver cream jug and teapot on the table—thin Queen Anne silver. 'I never use 'em. They're down for you in m' will, but you can take 'em now.'

Mrs. Russell hesitated. She coveted beautiful things, but she had no wish to be obliged to her husband's stepmother.

'If you're sure you don't want to keep them,' she said, doubtful.

'Ay, take them,' the old woman said humbly, anxious. 'They're good.'

'I can see they are,' Mrs. Russell said. She touched the jug delicately, wanting it.

The old woman hobbled off to fetch soft paper and pushed them into her hands. 'And you'll have a glass o' Madeira now, won't you?'

'No, thanks, I don't care for it,' Mrs. Russell said.

She carried them home and set them on the table to gloat over them at her ease. Then she set to cleaning and polishing them. At half past twelve Hervey ran in from school and she called her excitedly.

'Look,' she said, laughing, 'look what Mrs. Edward gave me this morning.'

'They're very nice,' Hervey said.

'Nice! What a word! They're beautiful. They were far too good for her. They were black, simply black, when I got them. I've always wanted a jug like this.'

She was flushed and joyful. She looked like a girl, her eyes clear, a pure pale blue, her whole face changed and gay.

'I wish you had everything you want,' Hervey said.

Mrs. Russell laughed at her. 'I shall never have that.'

'You haven't nearly enough. I shall give you a lot more things. Good things,' Hervey persisted. She did not know what was wrong with her that she felt unhappy.

'Will you?' her mother said in a curious voice.

She put down the jug she was still holding and looked at it once more before she went out to hurry the children's dinner onto the table.

'The silver in my mother's house is one person's work, polishing a part of it each day,' she said, slowly.

Chapter 15

Next to Antwerp she loved London, a simpler city in those days, gayer, fit to love. The ship lay at Tidal Basin and she would take the train to Fenchurch Street and then from Mark Lane to the real London, Hyde Park and the good shops. What riches for a captain's wife—the windows of Regent Street and Bond Street glittering with new clothes, flowers, jewels; the striped awnings above doorways; window-boxes in the fashionable squares; a shop in the Burlington Arcade filled with ostrich feathers in four colours—and how she loved feathers; sunlight painting the streets and the fronts of buildings, above pools of violet shadow; enclosure under trees in the Park, and she could sit for an hour, two hours, half listening to music of an easy insinuating sort, half alert for any new thing, the shape of a hat, lace worn this way but not that, a song whistled by a boy crossing the grass.

In June, 1907, on a morning, she was walking across Hyde Park alone—she had left Russell in Fenchurch Street—not thinking of anything and uplifted by the sense of ease and grandeur the Park gave her. She hesitated beside a chair lying on its side under a tree. A man who had been following her at a discreet distance now hurried to catch her up.

'Let me,' he said, setting the chair on its legs.

John Arnold had altered very little. His hair was thinner on his forehead but it was still thick and black. He was sun-

burned and elegant. His clothes, and the hat he was holding, were more suited to the Park than to the office in Fenchurch Street where he had caught sight of her leaving Russell. In becoming an active business man he had not lost his vanity about his looks. He liked to be taken for a man with nothing to do.

The colour ran to Mrs. Russell's face. She felt her heart stop, and race forward—but it was the shock, not any emotion. She said calmly,

'You startled me. What are you doing here?'

'I followed you from the office. You were so lost-looking with all your eyes over the side of the bus you'd not have noticed the archangel Gabriel if he had sat behind you with his hat over his eyes.'

He looked at her with his brilliant smile, appealing for her admiration. Be kind to me, because I adore you, was what his smile said. He had employed it so often, on so many women, it should by now have been showing marks of wear, but in fact it was charming and ingenuous. It affected Sylvia Russell against her will. To hide her uncertainty, she looked at him with a pretence of irony.

'Had you nothing better to do?'

'Nothing,' he said quietly.

He fetched another chair and set it beside hers. Under cover of the easy talk at which he was far more skilful than she was, he studied her face. She had changed in five years. She was heavier. The fine skin of her face was marred now by lines and thin veins. A line dragged down the corners of her mouth, and because there was rather more flesh on her jaw he noticed for the first time how stubborn and heavy it was. And yet—he was surprised to find how little these changes mattered. It now seemed to him that he had been thinking of her every day for five years, since the

morning he left the *Southern Star* without seeing her. This was not true. But what was true was that some thought of her, rarely obtrusive, had elbowed itself between him and any of the women he might have married. They became insipid for no reason; he grew tired of them and dropped them, and at forty he was on the way to becoming an amiable somewhat old-maidish bachelor for life.

She listened to his talk picking its way between them, between their divided minds. She was really calm now. She watched him, openly, quite unconscious that there was something arrogant—nearly insulting—in her curiosity. She thought he had grown slighter and smaller; a feminine quality in him showed itself strongly: he had almost the graces of a kittenish woman—his long brilliant glances, a turn of his narrow head, the slender hands with their line of black fine hair. How could I have been in love with him? she thought.

She was not taking any trouble to keep the talk going. When he stopped talking there was a long silence; she sat waiting, indifferent, for him to go on.

He turned to her abruptly, and said,

'Will you—I want to marry you. Will you let me talk about it?'

He had lost his air of assured ingenuous gaiety. In his agitation he kicked aside his hat which he had set carefully near his feet, and had to stoop for it. He came up red in the face and confused.

Mrs. Russell had been startled half out of her wits by his sudden attack. She looked at him—he was still groping for his hat—and felt a tenderness she didn't expect. It was the first moment of a genuine relationship between them. It vanished at once. She knew that she was scarcely moved.

An impulse of coquetry made her say, with a smile,

'Don't you know I'm thirty-nine years old?'

He was surprised. He had thought her younger. 'I shouldn't care if you were fifty,' he said violently.

His exaggeration hardened her. 'What nonsense!' she said lightly.

'You haven't answered me.'

She shook her head. 'Must I answer?' she said with a sadness so instinctive she could not recognise it; she thought she was smiling again.

Arnold brought his face closer to hers. 'Yes, of course. And be quick.'

'No.'

She caught sight of her unspeakable regret. It was not regret for him, for any man: but for the life she should have lived, a life so different from the one she had taught herself to do with that in a moment like this she felt she was being crushed, suffocated by the walls closing in on her. Nothing will ever change now, she thought, with despair.

Making a blind effort, she put all that on one side. She repeated her 'No,' with great calm, smiling.

Arnold seized her arm; shook it. 'You haven't—I can't bear it, you're not even thinking. Think.'

'But it's you who are not thinking,' she said gently. 'You seem to forget I have two children as well as a husband.'

'You can keep them, your—Russell wouldn't want them. I'm quite sure it can be arranged. The lawyers—money—'

'Now you're talking foolishly, and very offensively,' she said, her voice cold. She had raised it, and he noticed that it became harsh then.

'I don't know how to talk to you,' he exclaimed. 'You're not happy, you don't care for your husband, yet you're

offended when I talk sensibly to you. It's your Yorkshire hardness and narrowness. You—you hurt me.'

She did not answer him at once. He seemed childish at this moment—insincere—she was not moved by him now.

She was astonished. She could scarcely believe that she felt nothing; that for her everything was finished—so easily. The truth was that the whole of her life was against him, opposing him, making it impossible for her even to think of going to him. Too many years of exhausting work. Too many unending monotonous tasks, washing and nursing children, preparing meals, counting the money in one purse after another, making of beds. She felt a heavy woman, heavy with all the work of her hands, the night thoughts of a weary brain, the slow simple destruction of her store of life.

She had no energy to bother with him and his love. Yes, that's it, she said to herself—and neither would he have the energy if he were not so careful of himself. She felt a serene contempt for him.

'Oh, come—you'll get over it,' she said gaily, almost boisterously.

'Need you have said that?' he said sulkily. He turned his face aside and looked across the gold-green bubble of the Park. So she didn't take his pain seriously? But it was real, as real as his mortified vanity. There was another feeling, which he ignored. An element of relief. Disturbance, the upending of his comfortable satisfying life—he had escaped that. For one stinging instant, and never again, he wondered whether he would have risked it if she had not been the daughter of Mary Hervey—the scandal would have given that overbearing old woman something to think about.

A sense of humiliation swallowed up everything else. He ran away from it. Putting on a grieved smile he said,

'And I thought you the most straightforward woman I'd ever met.'

Fool, to try his attitudes on me, Mrs. Russell thought. 'I know nothing about the women you meet,' she said, with contempt, 'and what you thought about me is hardly very important.'

To her astonishment, tears came into his eyes. She saw for a moment the real man, real in his mortification. He was hurt as a much younger man might have been.

'Well, forgive me,' he said. 'But I did love you.'

Her heart softened as it did to her children when they were humbled and repentant.

'I shall never forget you and your kindness,' she said in a warm eager voice. 'Never.'

Arnold looked at her with his quick smile. 'Very well, my dear—and bless you.' He seemed to put the whole thing aside. 'Time we lunched. We're not far from the Berkeley. It's too hot to walk, we'll take a cab outside the Park.'

But she shook her head. 'No, thank you,' she said, with energy. 'I'd rather not. I really don't care for lunch.'

'Oh, but why?' he protested. 'You can eat as little as you like.'

'It's kind of you, but I'd rather not.'

The truth was she shrank from going into a fashionable restaurant. She had never been in such a place. When she was young, girls were not taken to restaurants, and her marriage had put her outside the world of the Berkeley. She felt a sharp regret. It irked her to miss the chance of seeing a new place, but she was suddenly afraid she wouldn't know how to conduct herself. And then her clothes were scarcely good enough.

'We'll say goodbye here,' she said, looking at him with an air of stubbornness.

'Very well.' He kissed her hand, confusing her. 'Goodbye.'

'Goodbye—and thank you.'

She watched him walk across the grass with his neat step. He holds himself well, she thought, with pleasure.

Her mind struggled with its disorder. She felt stupefied. What had she denied herself in sending him away? More than a meal. Then she felt relief, the relief of not having to make an effort. An ironical pity. He's very easily hurt, she thought; and he'll recover as easily.

She sat with her hands in her lap. She had taken off her gloves and she looked at her palm, so covered with fine lines that it was almost an old woman's hand. A nice hand to display at the Berkeley, she thought smiling. With a keen pleasure she thought of the cup of tea she meant to drink in a café at the other end of Piccadilly. I'll go now, she thought eagerly. I'll have sandwiches, as well.

She stood up. Happiness ran warmly inside her, with the thought of tea.

Her train was due at Danesacre at ten minutes past seven. There is a moment, as it approaches the station, when the line runs close to the upper harbour. You come on it suddenly, the smooth discoloured water, old mooring-posts, on which gulls perch, the abandoned shipyard, grass-grown, with the heap of rusting iron, the memory of departures, the old small houses, not one fellow to the next, jostling one another for foothold in the earth of the cliff below the fields, the ancient church, the gulls careless in flight.

At this hour of a June evening the light of the sun lifts all these between its hands. No matter how often a Danesacre man or woman sees this sight, it remains for him the most beautiful in the world. Sylvia Russell's heart stirred to it. Then she felt panic, as though the town, the lovely town, were closing on her like the thick suffocating wall of a cell.

So then everything is done with, she thought.

The train was running slowly between engine sheds. It reached the beginning of the long platform, and she began looking out to see if either of the children had come to the station to meet her. The train drew up and she hadn't seen them. The platform was crowded thickly with visitors coming for the season. Suddenly she caught sight of Hervey standing near the entrance, as she had been told to do when meeting a train. She was looking anxiously into the stream of passengers. Her mother saw instantly through her pretence of self-assurance. She called.

'Hervey. Here. I'm here.'

Hervey's face cleared. She ran forward.

'I was afraid I'd missed you,' she confessed.

The next day when she was walking along the street she saw Hervey's teacher, Miss Rebecca Frank. For the last three years, since she left the dame's school, Hervey had been taught by the Misses Frank in their school. The younger, Miss Rebecca, taught all subjects except music. Every parent agreed that she got the children on wonderfully. She believed in learning by heart. Her loving innocent enthusiasm asked and sometimes got prodigious feats of memory from the dullest pupils.

Mrs. Russell was too reserved and too distrustful to ask

'An, you're thinking about the shops in Canal Street,' he said archly.

She felt her smile crawling round the inside of her skull. He went off to look at the crew. She sank into a chair, and the steward hurried in to her with the brandy he had poured out ready.

The drops of brandy and soda-water she took kept her alive. By the time they reached Vera Cruz on the way home she was able to walk a few steps, and to eat a little. But she wouldn't go ashore. Without thinking it, she shrank from letting Maimie's glance fall on her. No knowing what she would say. I shan't forget her, she thought—but what a thing to remember!

William called her out on deck one morning. He had a queer self-conscious air.

'Look over there,' he said, clearing his throat. 'See—she's a Garton boat. One of your mother's. The *Mark Henry*—I know her. A fellow called James is master of her. Sixty-seven if he's a day. Ha, she's a fine boat. Fine boats, those sailing-ships. It's too late for them, of course, but they were fine boats.'

He curved his thick grained hands in a gesture, involuntary, wrung from him by the pressure against his eyes of so many images, as bewildering as a cloud of seagulls.

In the afternoon Captain James came on board. He came not because he wanted to, but because he didn't doubt it was his duty to call on young Mrs. Russell. Since his wife died of fever in Vera Cruz he had tried to carry out her duties as well as his own, to the point of choosing and sending out Christmas and Easter cards to the friends she had in every port in the world where the *Mark Henry* had called. He had written down the names of all the

And Jake, she thought with passion: Jake must have his chance, too. But Hervey first.

At this moment, almost without knowing it, she transferred silently her own hopes and ambitions to Hervey. To the first-born.

Chapter 16

The year passed, with a short summer, and long hard winter taxing her endurance. For the first time she felt, with surprise, tired before it was dark, when anyone may be tired. Spring woke in her a familiar discontent. Restless, she went in and out of the house on needless errands. Mrs. Edward Russell said to her, 'I watch you going out in the morning like a race-horse and coming shambling back.'

Her father came. He could never reconcile himself to the changes in her. He saw her so seldom that it was each time as if she had deliberately arranged to baffle him as sharply as possible. In the body of the mature woman there might be a girl as straight as a bolt, but he never heard anything from her beyond a word or two, or a gesture made too abruptly for him to answer.

He listened with the patience of surprise when she interrupted him in the middle of a remark to say eagerly,

'You didn't know Hervey had passed the Cambridge Junior, did you? Miss Frank sent her in a year early—well, two years—and she passed with honours in history and English. She worked very hard, she deserved to pass; now she's working for Senior.'

He tried to feel interested in these triumphs, but he had to stoop down to suppress a yawn. I must give up coming, he thought ironically; it's a waste of time and I have none to spare. During the last year or two he had begun to

realise that one day or another he would be closing a book for the last time, and the thought angered him.

Suddenly Sylvia said,

'I want to build a house, I can't bear living here.'

She spoke so vehemently he was startled, and laughed. That vexed her; she cried,

'I mean it. I get no, yes, no good of my life living in this house. How would *you* like to be without a bathroom? If I could get out tomorrow I'd go.'

It was the old Sylvia, eager and impatient. Delighted, he said,

'Why don't you build yourself a house?'

'I've been saving for that. Will has had good commissions the last few years. But I'm three hundred pounds short of what I need still. I don't want to build a cheap house.'

She stopped abruptly. Frowning, she began to talk about her children again. She felt vexed she had given herself away. She wanted him to think she was satisfied with her life.

A week later he sent her a cheque for four hundred pounds. He told her he had sold part of his library, '. . . books I shan't have time to look at again.' When she wrote a grateful letter she was thinking bitterly, All that amount of money spent on books while I have to scrape and save.

A year since, she had bought a piece of land on the west cliff. Now she went after the builder to start at once. The roof must be on before winter. From the day the foundations were dug she went every evening, when the men knocked off work, to look at the growing walls. When these rose high enough to be seen from a certain point on the cliff top, where there was a seat, she would go there during the day, and look fixedly at them, her back to the sea.

When Hervey was with her she talked over every detail of the rooms with her. It never entered her head that the girl of fourteen was less passionately interested than she was. Or had sharper dreams. This house was her greatest achievement so far.

As soon as the roof was on she went from room to room, trying to see her furniture in them. Some of it was not worth bringing to a new house. She would sell it and buy, a piece at a time. She had books of wallpaper sent home and spent hours at a time choosing among them. Hervey wanted to find a paper exactly like the one in the drawing-room. She harped on about it until her mother said,

'Don't talk nonsense, there are plenty of better papers.'

'Not better than this,' Hervey said jealously. 'Couldn't we peel it off carefully and take it?'

She was sometimes astonishingly childish. At these times her mother was torn between impatience and pity. She had sometimes a faint suspicion that the girl was being pushed or was pushing herself ahead too rapidly on a single road. She was beginning to stoop, and the dancing-class she went to every winter—against Russell's will; it was wasted money, he growled—did nothing to pull her up.

When they moved in, after a month with fires in the lower rooms drying the walls, Mrs. Russell worked like a dog and expected Catherine Peirson to—although it was not her house. She and Mrs. Russell were bound together more closely than either, if she lived (as they say) to be a hundred, would know. It was not a friendship. To Mrs. Russell Catherine was and would always be a woman from another class who worked for her. Their very bodies were different, made of different flesh. Yet she was closer, in a narrow wordless relationship which would never rise to the surface of her life, to this servant than she was to anyone

else not of her own family. It was a relationship older than friendship, the closeness of women who work together, although one is the mistress.

They had had their outs during the five years since Catherine began working for her. Due, usually, to Mrs. Russell's uncompromising tongue when the other woman did something her own way. There was only one way of doing things in Mrs. Russell's house—her own. Once or twice she had spoken brutally enough to wound Catherine's inarticulate self-respect.

One day, when this happened, Catherine didn't turn up in the morning. Mrs. Russell waited until late in the morning, then went after her to her house. She knew roughly where she lived—in one of the narrow streets huddled above the pier. Walking along it, she peered into the yards separating the houses—pitch-black some of them, others ending in a flight of worn steps tumbling down steeply to the pier. At last she stopped and asked a child standing in the entrance to one of these yards,

'Where does Catherine Peirson live?'

'Nivver heard on her,' he said slowly, like an idiot.

She went on a few steps, looking for someone to ask. He ran after her. 'Do you want her?'

'Of course I want her,' she said loudly. 'She works for me.'

'Why, she lives t' first door in our yard,' he said, now apparently satisfied that it was safe to tell her.

She went back, and knocked at the door. Catherine opened it.

'Well, Catherine, why didn't you come this morning?' she said quickly.

'I wasn't well,' Catherine said, with unmoved face.

The two women looked at each other, the one vexed, the

other fending off wrath with the sullen birth-old passivity of a poor woman. Mrs. Russell was strongly tempted to say, 'I think you'd better not come again.' An impulse unaccountable to her made her say drily,

'Will you be well enough to come tomorrow?'

There was a brief pause. Mrs. Russell thought, These yards—here since before Doomsday, here till Doomsday, whenever that is—this is the real Danesacre, the acre of those who were here before the Danes. A smell of salt and harbour mud. There are stones below these stones, and charred wood below that.

Still unmoved, Catherine said slowly, 'I could come up this afternoon, 'm, if you want me.'

'Tomorrow morning will do,' Mrs. Russell said. And turned away.

While they were settling into the new house there was extra work, and Catherine stayed until all hours. Every piece of china in the house had to be washed, as though the move had defiled it, carpets beaten, furniture polished. And polishing for Mrs. Russell was polishing—not a breath of dullness would escape; she could see it from the doorway. She hung curtains and pictures with Hervey's anxious help, exasperated if the wire of the pictures let one a fraction of an inch too low.

The third day she was tired out. She was arranging china in the breakfast-room. She didn't hear Catherine open the door. When she spoke Mrs. Russell started violently, and dropped the blue Nanking bowl she was dusting. It smashed.

'Look what you've done, you fool,' she said. She had turned crimson.

'I didn't do it, 'm,' Catherine said.

'It was your fault entirely. If you hadn't come in, talk-

ing your rubbishy stuff, it would never have happened.'

She was never able to be in the wrong, to be the one who had made the blunder. It humiliated her unbearably. She would say, do, anything to throw the blame on anyone else. (Was it because she could not afford to be less than her mother? or because a girl she once knew had made a fool of herself and must not be reminded of it?)

She scolded the other woman in a harsh voice, calling her 'fool, clumsy idiot,' and telling her to 'Run, run, fool. Get a brush and dustpan for the pieces.' When Catherine brought them she snatched them from her hands.

'Get back into the kitchen, I can't bear the sight of you.'

A minute or two later she heard Catherine leaving the house by the back door. Cooler now, she was still angry. The loss of the bowl—old Captain James gave it to her—was the loss of something she valued because she was poor in beautiful things. At this moment she could have wept like a child.

In the morning there was no Catherine, and she did not go after her. One can't do that sort of thing twice. Instead she waited a day or two, then went to see Mrs. Fisher. It was a good walk from the new house to the old. The streets she had lived in for so many years seemed, in the space of a week, smaller, shabbier, and full of secrets.

Mrs. Fisher knew all about it. She had seen Catherine's mother—and Catherine had said she wouldn't go back.

Mrs. Russell was dismayed for a moment. How to do without her? Then vexed. The insolence of her saying what she'll do and not do! she thought.

'I don't know that I want her back,' she said stiffly.

'Then there's nothing to be done.'

Mrs. Fisher's face, as broad as a copper saucepan, was almost that of an old priest. No priest had healed so many,

heard so many confessions, closed so many eyes by pressing a hand gently over the motionless eyelid—she had done more than the priest; she had washed the eyes before ever they opened.

'You can keep a servant too long,' Mrs. Russell said. She bit her lip. 'It's just as well to make a change now and then.'

'We'll hope it's for t' better,' Mrs. Fisher said calmly.

Chapter 17

Was she happy now that she had the house she had wanted —and it was a better house, better placed, furnished better, than any captain's wife could expect? Happy? She had her moments of intense happiness, but they were too keen, as keen as frost, and they burned her. And afterwards she was likely to fall into dark moods when everything wearied her, her house, her children, the very quietness of her life.

She was not a quiet mind.

And then she had such longing for perfection—if it was only in small things. A mark on the wallpaper spoilt a room for her. Or she bought an elaborately carved overmantel, and after a time—she was always learning—realised it was atrocious and had to get rid of it instantly and find an old glass to take its place. No Danesacre housewife would dream of buying a new carpet except to replace one too old to do any longer. She dumbfounded her neighbour when she sent a good carpet to the sale-room to make room for a finer. And how makeshifts irked her!

You never knew when she was entering a dark quarter. In the morning she would be gay, singing—her voice rich—

'. . . her friends are ever welcome in Maggie Murphy's home . . .'

and

'. . . Light in the darkness, sailor, day is at hand . . .'

and before noon again in the depths. If she had had anyone with her. But, a woman with her energy, her salty strong mind, to be closed in a house with children—it was wrong. She should have had more to her hands. More use for her.

One afternoon she had lost her temper, and instead of going out with Hervey she went to her room, and flung herself on the floor. She lay for hours there. The door was ajar, and Hervey passed it and saw her—and took no notice.

In her frightful boredom she could not force her body to move. She was uncomfortable and very cold. It seemed no use to go on living; she imagined that if she could die by wishing it she would wish instantly. Actually, she would have clung to life as stubbornly as she was lying on her floor—but did she know that? Of course she did not. And didn't know that her body had taken up the posture, to a finger, of the girl who threw herself in despair and humiliation on the dingy floor of a bedroom in the Hôtel de l'Europe in Dieppe. The body's memory is sharper and tougher than ours.

She began to long for comfort. But who was there to comfort her? Then she thought, If only I had a cup of tea!

At last she got up and went downstairs. Hervey was busy with her paintbox on the kitchen table. The servant was out; it was her day off. Hervey jumped up.

'Do you want tea now?' she said timidly.

'If you'd had any but a heart of stone you would have asked me that an hour ago,' Mrs. Russell said bitterly.

Hervey's face became blank; all expression was wiped off. She looked at her mother in the stolid way that made her seem heartless.

'For all you knew I might have been laid dead there.'

Hervey said nothing. She was not more aware that she felt anything. It would never have come into her mind that her mother could be dead. She would refuse to believe it. She wanted to believe nothing that was unalterable.

She had been painting hundreds of small flowers—she had inherited patience from her father—on the cover of a notebook. It bore the words 'Thoughts for every day of the month,' in her methodical round hand.

'What rubbish are you wasting your time on?' her mother said.

She wanted now to break down Hervey's silence, to hear a voice, even a foolish voice.

'Finishing a present for you,' Hervey said in deliberate tones.

Mrs. Russell picked it up, with a fine air of scorn. On each of thirty-one pages Hervey had copied verses of a hymn. Opening it at the 'Fourth Day' Mrs. Russell read,

> Gently, Lord, lead Thou our mothers,
> Weary they;
> Bless all our sisters and brothers
> Night and day.

She burst out laughing. It was at first a jeering laugh, then gay and warm. After an anxious second or two Hervey joined in. She was so thankful and relieved she would have laughed at anything.

Another morning Mrs. Russell woke both children at five o'clock.

'Get up and get dressed. It's the most lovely morning, far too lovely to lie in bed,' she said in a gay voice. 'We'll go out on the cliff.'

Hervey got up at once. She fell in with anything her mother wanted to do. Even when she was not interested

she pretended to be—always. She was oversensitive to her mother's moods. She felt responsible when something her mother had planned did not come off, and she exerted herself cunningly to make it seem less disappointing.

Mrs. Russell gave each child a slice of bread, and out they went.

The air was bright and soft, not warmed yet by the sun, but glittering. Everything glittered; the grass, the immense rind of the sea, a multitude of fine lines were scored on it like threads in silk. Not a breath of wind. And light like the transparent body of an insect in which every tree cut as clearly as veins.

They walked along the edge of the cliff. Jake had hung back, sulking because he hated being wakened up. Even his sullenness didn't spoil Mrs. Russell's pleasure. She walked quickly and eagerly, like a girl. Suddenly Jake stopped sulking, and began to clown, to make her laugh at him. She stood looking at him with her lined small-boned hands laid on her waist, and laughed, until she was out of breath.

'That's enough,' she said. 'This is a good day, a beautiful day—and this is the best time. I *like* to be out early. Yes, I like it.'

They came back by the lane. As they passed the railway cutting Mrs. Russell saw a bush of broom in full, in radiantly full flower. The drops of pure bright yellow swarmed against the grass of the slope, it was a steep slope, above the lines.

'Oh, look, Hervey,' she said eagerly.

'I'll get over and get some for you,' Hervey said.

She and Jake began to climb hurriedly over the fence.

'I don't think people are allowed to go there,' Mrs. Russell said.

'It's all right,' Hervey assured her.

She and Jake together stripped the bush of its finest sprays. They felt they were doing something slightly dangerous for her. She took the sprays from them, her eyes sparkling with pleasure.

'Now that was worth coming out for, wasn't it?' she said.

She stood there smiling, the sunlight on her, her arms full of flowers.

Hervey was puffed up with pride. 'One of these days I shall give you a present every day,' she boasted.

Hervey had already formed the wild notion of going to a university, but neither she nor Mrs. Russell knew what she ought to do. Mrs. Russell took it for granted that she was clever, and did nothing to prevent her studying every evening. No time was wasted on games at the Misses Frank's school, so that in some subjects she was in advance of her years. In others, such as arithmetic, she was hopeless. Figures had always been a mystery to Miss Rebecca. Her pupils counted on their fingers and applied blindly rules neither she nor they understood.

Mrs. Russell asked advice of the Congregational minister: he explained that there were such things as scholarships and sent for papers about them. Three open scholarships were given for the county.

'You must get one of those,' Mrs. Russell told Hervey.

'Every school in the country will compete,' Mr. Hanover said.

'I dare say,' Mrs. Russell said, 'but she must get one all the same. I'm sure she can.'

Mr. Hanover saw the same expression in her eyes and in

Hervey's, a blind stubborn closing of the mind to other thoughts.

'Then,' he said gently, 'I think you'll have to send her to another school for a term or two. Why not to the secondary at Scarborough? There are Danesacre children who go every day.'

'An hour and ten minutes train journey?' Mrs. Russell exclaimed.

She was very doubtful. She had realised, suddenly, that Hervey was passing out of her hands. If she could have delayed, she would. But the girl herself talked of nothing else, and the impulse to help her was stronger in Mrs. Russell than the other. She went down to see Miss Frank.

'Hervey will be leaving at the end of the term,' she said. 'I'm sending her to Scarborough.'

A strange look came into Miss Rebecca's face, as though something moved up behind it, to strengthen the spare flesh and thin bones against an assault.

'We shall be sorry to lose her,' she said calmly, 'but of course she must get on.'

'Of course,' Mrs. Russell said.

It was only afterwards she thought, I might have shown a little reluctance. But she was not able to pretend a feeling. She rarely tried. And when she wanted a thing her mind closed on it, a hand stronger than her hand. As she had once wanted for herself she now wanted for Hervey—what? Some miracle. Something to which she could point, and say, 'You see? I was not as other women are—my children have shown it.'

The life in her body must be different from other life. There must be a different sun in her firmament.

And it's true that her daughter felt, all her life, she must bring things—a scholarship, a degree, praise, honours—and

hand them to her. As balm for her disappointment. Look, look, don't be disappointed; take these.

'We'll have a day at Scarborough, and we can see the headmaster about you,' Mrs. Russell said.

They took the eight o'clock train, hurrying to the station with ears straining for the whistle. But of course they were early. The platform was roofless and in the road of every wind. They walked up and down to keep warm, and Mrs. Russell said,

'I don't know how many journeys I've taken with you when you were a little girl, Hervey. Very long journeys, some of them.'

Her voice came slowly after memory. It pierced the girl's heart.

'We shall go a lot more journeys together,' she said.

'No,' Mrs. Russell shook her head. 'You will go on journeys, my little love. You were a Thursday's child. Far to go. My journey time is over.'

'I shan't go anywhere without you,' Hervey exclaimed.

The train came in, and they hurried to find a compartment with no other passengers. The journey was along the coast. Slow, with a wait at each small station. The day was overcast. At one point on the line, the train was in sight of a wide bay, and as they were passing it the sun shot its rays down behind a cloud and pressed a silver hoop between sky and sea. The cloud melted suddenly and the silver scattered over the sea, the hide of a living animal salted with light. Cool air, an odour of peat and salt, came into the carriage.

In Scarborough the first thing they had to do was to drink a cup of coffee to restore them after the journey. Then they visited the shops. Scarborough has three or four shops which have the air of being London shops. In one of

these Mrs. Russell always paused at the furs. An alert young man drew her attention to a fur stole. 'It's a lovely fur,' he said, 'a bargain. Sable will never be so cheap again.'

Mrs. Russell pursed her mouth. 'It's quite a nice fur,' she said grudgingly.

'It's beautiful! Look at this sealskin coat with the fox collar. Feel it. It's light, now isn't it? You'll go a long way before you find a fur coat as easy to wear as this. Do try it on.'

He was so friendly and eager that Mrs. Russell softened.

'But I don't want a fur coat,' she said, smiling.

'You mean you're not going to buy one now,' he said daringly. 'Of course you want one.'

'Well, perhaps so.'

She lingered, drawn to him by his eagerness. He had fine red hair, bristling like a bush, and a long smiling mouth.

'Just slip it on,' he said coaxingly. 'Even if you don't buy one now, you will one day.'

'Very well,' Mrs. Russell said.

She turned herself in the dark skins before the glass and drew the collar to her chin. It was certainly light in weight for a fur coat.

'It's really your coat,' the young man told her.

That was too much. Taking it off, she handed it back to him with an air of hauteur. She said coldly, almost sneering,

'It's not mine today, I'm afraid.'

Hervey had been standing by in an agony of embarrassment. She now felt so humiliated for the young man she could not lift her head to look at him. But he was unabashed.

'It will be some day. Or one like it,' he said cheerfully. 'My name is Porsen. I know I shall sell you a coat one of these days.'

'I think it will be a long time,' Mrs. Russell retorted. But she looked at him with more kindness.

They sauntered off carelessly to look at the other departments. One floor was given over to furniture. Mrs. Russell examined every piece, and Hervey suffered tortures each time an assistant glanced towards them. One day when they were here Mrs. Russell had kept a man turning over heavy carpets for an hour.

'I like that young man,' she said suddenly.

'Which man?' Hervey asked.

'The young man in the furs, of course.' She was impatient. 'That Porsen, or whatever he called himself. It really was a beautiful coat.'

'Why didn't you buy it?'

'It was thirty guineas!'

'As soon as I'm working and earning money I'll buy you a fur coat,' Hervey said.

'You must earn it first,' her mother said kindly.

Their appointment with the head of the secondary school was at twelve o'clock. Mrs. Russell knew precisely what she was going to say to him; she listened with impatience while he spoke about the standard of scholarship in the school: then, when he turned to Hervey and began questioning her, she interrupted him in a curt arrogant voice.

'Really, none of this is important. We've come here to put my daughter in the school. She's passed her Senior Cambridge. She's coming here to take matriculation next June and take one of the County scholarships. There isn't

anything else to say—if you have room for her next term.'

He was an elderly man, a scholar—who should have done better for himself than a secondary school. He had the schoolmaster's cynicism about parents, but he had never met, in any, with this calm assurance. It knocked the wind out of him. He was amused and indignant. Looking stealthily at the girl, he saw that her mother's words hadn't surprised her. In her smooth rosy face the large eyes, clouded, bluish, met his with an ambiguous and penetrating gaze. She might have been summing him up. Abruptly he was sorry for her. She would get a harsh lesson.

'Certainly we have room,' he said slowly.

'Then I think that's all,' Mrs. Russell said.

She rose, with an air of dismissing him in his own room.

'You're going to send her to us?'

'Certainly. That's why we came. I must thank you for seeing us.'

'I hope your daughter will do well here.'

'Oh, I'm sure she will,' Mrs. Russell said smoothly.

She stepped out into the autumn sunshine, with the sense that she had turned a corner. For a moment she felt sad. She looked at Hervey and said,

'Well, now you're started, my little dear.'

Hervey looked at her with one of her sudden smiles, warm and intimate. She said nothing.

It was time for their meal. They took it a little early, to be sure of getting a good table in the restaurant. They were lucky today. Mrs. Russell's favourite table was empty; they hurried straight to it, feeling they had had a triumph.

The choosing of the meal. Mrs. Russell always ordered the same dishes, but she lingered over the menu with a pretence of making up her mind. Then in a clear voice she gave the order.

'Steak and kidney puddings. Potatoes, mashed. And banana creams afterwards.'

She looked round her with a bright smile. 'If we don't order our creams now they may be gone,' she said to Hervey. 'I'm glad we got this table. I like the waitress.'

Everything was going well. She felt gay and light-hearted, as though her life could never be dull again. After lunch they went into another of the large shops where Mrs. Russell meant to buy a hat. She tried on one after another, and none pleased her. Hervey became anxious. The day, she felt, would be spoiled if they went back without one. At last the woman brought a grey silk toque with a crown made of violets. As soon as Mrs. Russell put it on she knew that no other hat would do. She turned to Hervey.

'Do you like it?' she said.

'It's a lovely hat,' Hervey said quickly.

'But do you like me in it?'

'Yes, it suits you perfectly.'

'I wonder,' Mrs. Russell said. She delayed, looking again at herself.

'Oh, it does, madam,' the woman said, smiling. 'It's the right hat for you. It's one of the new autumn styles.'

'What is the price?' Mrs. Russell said. She had put on an air of indifference, as though it hardly mattered to her whether she bought it or not.

'Forty-five shillings.'

'Oh, it's far too much,' Mrs. Russell said with energy. 'I couldn't pay that.'

'It's a new model, you see, madam.'

'Yes, yes, it's very nice, but I never spend so much on a hat.'

The woman—she was Mrs. Russell's age—looked at her

in the glass. She knew Mrs. Russell by sight. There was a sympathy between them. Women, to the milliner, were divided into humbugs and genuine. Mrs. Russell was among the second, and she felt eager to see her pleased.

'Wait a moment,' she said in a low voice. 'I'll see if we can take a little off.'

She hurried away, angular in her moiré silk, hardly a person. Mrs. Russell leaned towards the long glass, gazing into it as if she were trying to pass beyond her body into that other body, imperishable, remaining when she moved away from the glass; it would draw back into the depths of the glass and wait there with the other reflections stored in it. She moved her head from side to side. Taking up the hand-glass she studied the back of the toque. Then, looking again anxiously at her face in the glass, her eyes curiously remote and baffled, she said,

'Hervey, are you *sure* it suits me?'

'I'm quite sure,' Hervey said. 'You look beautiful in it. Do have it.'

'It's a lot of money.'

'Yes, but you'll like it.'

She was overwhelmingly anxious for her mother to take the hat. It was because she saw that her mother wanted it and because, into the girl's body from the mother's, passed a current of longing so acute she thought she would die if her mother were disappointed.

The woman came back, still smiling. 'We'll let you have it for forty shillings, madam.'

Mrs. Russell sighed. 'Well,' she said, hesitating. She made up her mind. 'Very well, I'll take it.'

'You won't regret having it,' the woman said.

'I hope I shan't,' Mrs. Russell smiled.

She was excited now and happy. Sauntering along the streets, she talked it over with Hervey, and the girl had to find a dozen ways of saying the same thing. It was a beautiful toque, it suited her, it was well worth the two pounds.

They still had other shops they must look into. And the antique shop on the south cliff, where Mrs. Russell had once bought a chair, so that she and the man were almost cronies, and she never went to Scarborough without visiting him. Not to buy: to see what he had and ask the price of one or two pieces. The man knew she wasn't meaning to buy, but he liked her and he enjoyed talking; and so, when she had seen everything, they parted friends.

They must walk through the public gardens, and past a row of new fine houses Mrs. Russell looked jealously at. In the clear air, and laced to it by an infinite quantity of bright threads, the sea stretched itself behind the hedges of the gardens. She scarcely glanced at it. It was not the sea that brought her here. All told, they had now walked for miles. She was beginning to feel tired.

'It's very pleasant,' she said. 'Still, I wouldn't live here.'

She said the same thing each time. And Hervey agreed with her.

They were catching the four train back. In the restaurant where they had lunched they now had a pot of tea, and hurried to the station. A boy from the shop was to bring the hat to the train, and she was on edge until she had it safely. 'Suppose they've forgotten to send it!'

'I could go back for it and come by the next train,' Hervey said.

'No, that wouldn't do at all.'

'Why not? . . . There he is!'

Mrs. Russell lifted the box—such good boxes they used —to the rack and seated herself directly beneath it. She exchanged with Hervey a glance of pure happiness. Not every day is satisfying. Ah, if only, she thought, I could do something different every day, how happy I should be!

Chapter 18

Next year Russell took a voyage off. He had talked about it, the time before when he was home, and his wife opposed it. She saw no reason why he should want to sit at home for three or four months. No other captain took voyages off. It was not as if they could easily afford it. Nor, she thought scornfully, as if he had a hard life of it at sea. He's waited on hand and foot, with good meals; except in bad weather, a comfortable easy life.

She was vexed when he wrote from Newcastle in January that he had settled to take the voyage. The thought of him hanging about the house until April or May was too much. And yet some part of her mind welcomed him. She had not cast him off altogether. A certain eagerness, almost a certain hope, stayed with her. Perhaps a younger woman's belief in the future.

He was at home until the middle of May.

They quarrelled bitterly during these months. He resented in her her impulses to change, to gaiety. She began to think he was staying at home only to spy on her. He wanted her to tell him where every penny of the housekeeping money went. He grumbled, he interfered. There was no need, he said, for Hervey to learn the piano, or for either child to go to dancing-class. He wanted Mrs. Russell to buy cheap food; he was always coming in with wonderful tales of bargains to be picked up in the Harbour Street shops.

'If you want to eat foreign eggs and bacon at fourpence a pound, bring it in and I'll see that it's cooked for you,' his wife said. 'But I'll not eat it.'

She refused to give him an account of her spendings. Once allow that he had a right to ask and there would be no holding him. He would pry into everything. She drew the same sum of money out of their joint account every month as always, and spent it as she pleased. Where he could, and did, put his foot down was on other spendings —things for which, if he had not been at home, she would have drawn a cheque.

In April a famous singer came to the town to give one concert. The cheapest tickets were ten shillings each. It would never happen again that such a man found it convenient to spend a night in Danesacre. Mrs. Russell made up her mind to go, and take the children. But she couldn't squeeze it out of the housekeeping money, and when she asked Russell he refused to draw any more.

'But the whole town will be there to hear him,' she cried.

'Then if th' whole town has ten shillings a head to spend on theaytre tickets it's better off than I am,' Russell said with his short laugh.

'You can't be so mean and miserly,' she said, with contempt.

'Ha, I'm not mean,' he protested. 'You've all th' money you want for th' house and th' children. Dancing-classes and the rest. I can't afford thirty shillings for you to take them to hear a fellow caterwauling. Why, I've heard better singers than him for a shilling or two, he wouldn't be coming if he was any good. Fact is he's no good now, he's finished, he comes here fooling people, I happen to have more sense than to be taken in by him. That's all.'

'Rot! You don't know what you're talking about,' she said.

'Ha, don't I? I tell you a man in London, a very clever man, he knows far more about singing—well, he once sang to the King—told me this chap wasn't any good now.'

'You and your clever men in London,' she cried. 'I don't believe a word of it. Not a word.'

She watched him hurry out of the room, as he always did, when she challenged his stories. 'The liar he is,' she said loudly to Hervey. 'The despicable liar.'

She might have defied him and drawn extra money from the bank herself, but she wouldn't. After all, it was his money. She could not quite bring herself to spend it against his will on a mere pleasure.

She could have coaxed, but she would never lower herself to that with him. There was a deeper reason. Without guessing it, she wanted him to disappoint her, to hurt her by withholding what he could give easily. She must be convinced of his worthlessness, of his meanness. She must suffer at his hands humiliation in herself. She felt a profound secret satisfaction while the tears of her cruel disappointment were scalding her cheek.

On the evening of the concert she took Hervey and stood outside the hall watching the people go in. Hervey was wretched about it. Everyone must notice them, she thought, and be talking. She begged her mother to let them go home.

But Mrs. Russell stood there until the last straggler hurried up the steps. She scarcely knew what she was thinking. I shan't forget it, she repeated. I shall never, never forget this. She felt her mind being forced apart like the fingers of a closed hand, with pain, with slow bit-

ter drops of blood. When she turned to go back to her house she walked like an old woman.

For three days after this, she did not speak one word to him. Once she heard him talking and laughing in the hall with the two children. She came down the stairs, slowly, looking at them. She saw Hervey look at her with a scared guilty face, then slink away taking Jake with her. She felt pleased. She wanted them to feel guilty. Her children must be on her side, only on hers.

Hervey came back with a flower she had bought with her Saturday sixpence. She took it from her coldly, scarcely thanking her.

At meals she sat and served them, and ate her food, as though she were alone. No one spoke. Russell gobbled his food noisily, and the two children kept their heads over their plates. She took her tea alone, in the sitting-room. Even when they had been reconciled she kept this up; it was too good a custom to let drop.

Their reconciliation was a poor affair. They came to it because she was tired of her silence, not because she forgave him. For a short time she strove to make better of their lives. In the end she always gave it up. He gave her no help. He was sixty now; he would never change. Gentleness, forbearance, he took to himself as a tribute to his superior nature, and began grousing again. And why *should* I forbear? she thought, despising him.

She found she was going to have another child. She felt only despair and resentment. After all these years to have the worry and labour of a child. It was too much. She did not want it.

Clara came to see her during this time and she let her go away without telling her. But one Sunday when Hervey was reading beside her she broke out in a bitter speech.

'So he goes tomorrow. Better if he'd never come.'

Hervey started. That voice, her mother's voice in impatience or anger, entered her body directly; it could reach down to the nerves, and twitch them until she felt sick. It was the same whether she was taken by surprise or had time to school herself.

'It will be all right when he's gone,' she said awkwardly.

'He can't take with him the mischief he's done,' Mrs. Russell said. 'Oh, if he'd never come home. A voyage off. A fine voyage it's been for me—ay, and will be.'

She stood up. It seemed to her that her body was already heavier. She felt choked by her anger; she could scarcely breathe.

'The harm he's done,' she repeated. 'I may die, for all he'd care.'

'Are you ill?' Hervey asked timidly.

But her mother turned her face away. 'Don't ask silly questions,' she said curtly.

Ashamed because she wanted to go on reading, Hervey let her eyes rest on the page. She did not want to believe her mother was in danger and she drove the thought from her mind. It worked in her. After a few days she found herself thinking suddenly that her mother was going to have a baby. She had no notion how she knew this, and she tried to dismiss it. But a few days later Mrs. Russell showed her some baby clothes in a shop window, and said,

'We shall be needing those one of these days.'

Hervey's heart sank. What a nuisance, she thought at once. She pretended to be pleased.

'That will be nice,' she said.

Mrs. Russell looked at her. 'Do you really think that?'

'Yes.'

Mrs. Russell felt comforted. She had become afraid of her loneliness. At night, lying in bed sleepless, not able, because of the increasing discomfort of her body, to lie quiet, she had thought that her bitterness against her husband might harm his child in her body. During these days—it was summer and very hot—she strove to be quiet, yet lost her temper so quickly that day after day was intolerable. Jake had even begun to defy her, and Hervey—the examination was over and now she was waiting for the result—was often silent. She's thinking of herself, Mrs. Russell thought, impatient. She could, quickly enough, make her cry, but she could not feel the girl obedient to her, watching her face rather than listening, as the child did. Years ago—the child 'Martha.'

She was comforted by Hervey's swift response. Now she relied on her. She found herself wishing that no scholarship would come her way. She can always try for it again, she told herself to ease her conscience.

But in September the news came. Hervey had won one of the three County scholarships. So now she must get her ready for the university—she would need a dress or two, a warm coat. Mrs. Russell tried to feel an interest in all the plans, but she was languid with the coming child, heavy in body and spirit. When she thought of living in the house without Hervey she felt an extreme dismay. So many years since, seventeen years, she was lying in the bedroom of her first house, and her child, her first child, sleeping with her, in the bed. Since then, what had happened? What had become of her, of her life, of her flesh? She looked at herself in the glass. There were lines on her face; it was heavier. Even her eyes had altered.

The child moved in her. She clutched the back of a

chair, in fear. Nothing can help me now, she thought. Nothing saves me, I'm old, I shall be alone.

When the time came she travelled to Scarborough with Hervey, and saw her into the Leeds train.

'I shall miss you dreadfully,' she said.

She saw Hervey's face change. The foolish look of anxiety in it. The girl stiffened her thin shoulders.

'But I shall come back,' she said.

'No, it will never be the same. You're going away.'

'It isn't for very long.'

The train started. Mrs. Russell shook her head, smiling. She watched it out of sight, and Hervey leaning awkwardly from the window, her new hat already shapeless slipping to the side of her head. Then, slowly, she went away, out of the station. I'll go and drink a cup of tea, she thought.

She walked, scarcely seeing, her thoughts driven on herself. This is an end, she was thinking: a part of my life is finished.

When she was seated in the café she could only think how many times she had been in here with Hervey.

Her third child was born six weeks later, in November. The week before she went to Mrs. Fisher, to ask if she would stay in the house the first days.

'The girl I have is no good,' she said. 'I'd pack her off if there was time to get another. If you came for a week, only to overlook her. There'll be the nurse. And there'll be Jake's meals.'

Mrs. Fisher was sitting in a low chair in the middle of her room. She was kneading bread in a bowl on her lap: it rested between her thighs as though they were the roots

of a tree. The room was very warm; a smell of earth and moisture mingled with the sharper scent of yeast in the bread.

'Nay, I shan't come,' she said. 'I can't.'

The words gave Mrs. Russell an extraordinary shock. 'I never heard you say that before,' she exclaimed.

'I'm seventy-two,' Mrs. Fisher said.

She kept her eyes on the mound of bread, as though she were saying, Surely I can be left to myself now. After all these years of running to other people's houses, to help, I can be left peacefully in my own, surely. Mrs. Russell felt that the old woman had no interest in her. She had taken back all a lifetime of kindness and was living narrowly and stubbornly in her own veins and among the roots, the threadlike roots of life that alone were left to her.

'What can I do?' she said in a low voice: she was ashamed, the instant she had said it, of giving away her atrocious weakness, her dismay. Mammy Fisher's indifference was a greater shock to her than if she had heard she was dead. Now she felt abandoned. Lost.

'If th' girl you have is no good you s'd think of going after Catherine Peirson.'

'I heard she was married,' Mrs. Russell said.

'Ay, she is. Her name's Elliot now. But she has no bairn, and her husband's i' t' Navy. She's glad enough to work, I dare say.'

Mrs. Russell sat still. If I say only the word I can have her back, she thought. She was sharply tempted. Her stubbornness took hold of her again, and she shook her head.

'She left me of her own will,' she said, implacably.

Mrs. Fisher said nothing. When, after a minute's silence, Mrs. Russell rose to go away, she scarcely looked from the bread to the other woman's face.

'Goodbye,' Mrs. Russell said in a dry voice. 'I'm sorry you couldn't come.'

'Goodbye to you.'

Outside Mrs. Fisher's, she stood for a minute looking towards her own other house. But the younger woman who had lived in it with her young children was as remote from her as the woman she had just left. She turned away. A light fog was drifting behind the street-lamps and the leafless trees in the gardens. She carried her heavy body past lighted rooms, down one steep street and up another, and along the wide dark lane to her house. It was a long walk. She seemed at moments to be fastened down to the earth; in the chill dark, houses and fields stood to watch her. At others she felt the earth move under the remote sky, carrying her and Danesacre with it on its strange voyage.

When she reached her house she crept into it like an animal into its hole.

She was very ill at the birth of her child. Her body, at forty-two, had lost its elasticity. She became sure she was dying, and blamed bitterly, in a harsh voice, the nurse and the doctor because neither of them would tell her the truth.

The child was a girl. She heard the nurse saying,

'Why, she's the image of you, Mrs. Russell.'

Then she dropped into an exhausted sleep, from which she woke half in delirium. She saw the door of her room open softly. The nurse went over to it, finger to her mouth. Straining her eyes, she saw Catherine Peirson's face in the opening.

The nurse closed the door quickly and came back. Mrs. Russell found her voice.

'What is that woman doing here?' she said. 'Send her off at once. I won't have her in my house.'

The nurse soothed her. 'She's going at once,' she said. 'She's gone now.'

'Where is she?'

She was speaking about the child now. The nurse lifted her from the cradle. 'There.'

She had not wanted this child. Now that she saw her for the first time, living, she felt a profound responsibility. It was unlike anything she had felt for the others. I may have harmed her, she thought. Touching the child's face, she felt it start and thought, I'll make it up to you; I'll do everything for you, care for you, give you everything. Wait.

When she was stronger, the nurse told her that the servant had left, walked out of the house even before the labour was over. A neighbour knew where Catherine Peirson lived—'Elliot she is now'—and fetched her. 'And a real good one she is to work,' the nurse said. 'We'd have been badly off.'

Mrs. Russell did not answer. The same evening she saw Catherine on the landing when the door opened, and called her in. She came in, unsmiling, walking softly, and stood at the end of the bed.

'So you've come back,' Mrs. Russell said.

'I can go if you don't want me,' Catherine said, calmly, without impudence.

'You'd better stay now you're here,' Mrs. Russell said. She closed her eyes and heard the other tiptoeing out. With a sigh of relief and pleasure she settled her aching body deeper in the bed. Now I can sleep.

Chapter 19

Next year, in the autumn, Jake left her. He was fourteen and she had wanted him to stay at school, but he said he wanted to go to sea, and there was only one way for him to go—as an apprentice.

He was a silent boy. He told no one his thoughts. He was much out of the house, and she never knew what he had been doing. He used to say, when she asked him, 'I went with some boys for a walk.' Once, by his limping, she discovered that he had cut his leg during the walk, a jagged cut three inches long and very deep. It had to be stitched. He said he had hurt it on a stone.

He disobeyed her. She quarrelled with him about it: they had exhausting scenes, but she couldn't punish him now.

He was young for his age. Almost a child. To look at he was very like her. He had the same eyes, into which a curious look of distance came readily; not the look of a child. Only his mouth was unlike hers; it was long and sullen, the lower lip rather too full. He had square childish hands.

Mrs. Russell hated the thought of him at sea. She knew too well what life a boy had on tramp steamers. She argued with him—but to no good, because she had no other plan to offer. He was not, like Hervey, a scholar. He disliked reading. His one thought was to get away from books and school. If he had ambitions, they took this form—to get away. His father encouraged him. 'Ha, now I think you

might be some good,' he said to him. 'But it's the first time I've thought so.'

Mrs. Russell was vexed. 'You know nothing about the boy,' she said drily.

'I know that books and stuff are no good.'

'And I know he's too young to go,' she said. 'He doesn't know his own mind. A boy has a hard life of it at sea.'

'I suppose I didn't have a hard life?' Russell said, with deliberate pathos. 'And I had to go when I was thirteen, mark you.'

'No doubt you did,' his wife said. She thought, He's always moaning over himself. She detested him for it. 'If it was hard for you it will be just as hard for him.'

'A hard life never did anyone any harm,' Russell said portentously.

'Let's hear less about yours, then,' she said, with a flash of rage.

He wants the boy to have a bad time, she thought. He's like Abraham with Isaac. She was beside herself with anger and grief for the boy. She could do nothing. She had no money of her own to train him for some other life. And Jake himself wanted to go. Reluctantly, she let her husband make the arrangements with the firm. In September the boy went off to his first ship. It was a new boat, the *Burmese Star*.

Before he went she had a photograph taken of him in his uniform. The proofs came up after he had gone. She could not look at them without tears, because of his hands laid childishly on his knees. He sat stiffly, looking in front of him with a boy's awkward confidence.

She waited for letters from him.

The first was from New York. He wrote in a large unformed hand, making mistakes:

Dear Mother,

I have just got your letter, I think they must have being delayed somewhere, thank-you very much for the letter. In Newcastle as soon as I got aboard I had to turn to taking stores aboard, and we were all that tired that we turned in as soon as we had had tea, as the ship sailed at 5.0 A.M. the next morning and we had to be on deck at 4.0 A.M. I got your letter just as were casting off another half-hour and it would have missed me.

We have plenty of work to do and not too much food, though I suppose we get sufficient.

We turn off at 5.30 and start work at 6.0 while in port, but at sea we are 4 hours off and 4 on all day and night. First of all we swill the decks down, then scrub the wheel house and chart house out. Then all the brass work has to be cleaned, then we oiled all the wooden decks on our hands and knees and tarred the iron one, then all the paint-work was to wash and then paint.

While at night time we have to be on the bridge to strike the bell every half hour, read the log, call the watch, and make the officer on watch's cocoa, and try to keep awake.

Then in port the decks are to sweep, and the lamps to trim, and ropes to coil and sometimes stand on the gangway.

We are having very hot weather here, and some of the apprentices sleep on deck, but I thought I wouldnt because of the dew. I think I brought all except my onoto pen which I left at home much to my dismay.

We were all sick the first day or two, but we had to work all the time so we soon got over it.

We get hash for breakfast, dinner and tea and no supper, except ham and eggs twice a week.

I think we go direct to Buenos Aires and then to Santos and back to New York. I having been waiting for your letter before writing.

Well I must finish if I want any sleep. With best love to yourself and everybody at home

Your loving son

JAKE.

He isn't liking it, she thought at once. But there was nothing she could do. Other captains' wives in the town told her, 'Oh, they never like it at first. They soon settle down.' She half shared their easy submissiveness. Poor women cannot choose what their sons shall do.

The baby, Carlin, was very ill. The doctor said she had appendicitis. He couldn't operate on a year-old child and for a week she hung on the edge. So for the time she put away the thought of her son and his disappointment.

His next letter had been written in Santos three days before Christmas Day:

I hope you are quite well, and enjoyed yourself at Christmas. I have just got your letter and papers, thank you very much for them, they have come in time for Sunday and Christmas Day, and it is very nice to hear of the old place. I expect the Conservative Bazar will be very nice, as a Crysanthamum Bazar is new.

I am very glad you had your eyes seen to, and I hope they will not hurt you anymore.

I am so sorry about your Influnza, and I hope it is quite better now none the worse for it.

Poor Carlin seems to have had a bad time of it, I hope she is getting better all right and that you do not make yourself ill by sitting up at night.

It seems strange out here as Christmas draws near, no busyness, no preparations of any sort, just a day off and good grub, I will wish you all a Merry Xmas and a happy time as soon as I wake. It is strange how time goes, we are in the 4th month now, and completing the first voyage, how different if it had been a home trading boat, we would have been homeward bound, instead of back to New York.

There was one song they sang at the Mission at Buenos Aires which seemed to express everyone's wishes just now, it ran 'I stand in a land of roses, but I dream of snow, where you and I were happy in the days of long ago', it was one of those hot heavy eavenings and the lights were low, and the hall full of

sailors, and there was not a sound, and I think everyone's thoughts were turned to England.

We expect to leave tomorrow at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and arrive at Rio on Sunday, stay there two or three days then up to Trinidad and New York.

I wonder if I will meet Father out here, I have not had a letter since New York.

The mail and its possible arrival is always the most interesting news out here and this one has being a happy one for me, it is wonderful how a letter or a paper brightens things up. And not only to one but to many for your papers slowly go round to the sailors. Our third mate is a fine fellow, a big Irishman who always lends me books and anything I need. I lent him a Daily Mail tonight as he never gets any, and as I passed him now three hours later he was still poring over it, I am reading the first one tonight, and looking through the Danesacre papers and reading over your letter.

A time like this makes one think more and more of home and what we miss in being away from it and yet you have to leave it before you see it. It has been raining here for the last three days and we have being scrubbing teak-wood and the derracks with sand and canvas all day long, we were on the poop when the mate came along with the letters and gave us a spell to read them, so out there in the rain we sat down and read them sheltering them behind the pig house. I was in the mate's room all this morning making up the receipts of each wagon of coffee into bundles of 4,000.

I trim all the lamps daily now whenever we are not at sea, and keep the locker clean and get any oil which is needed. Two of us get on very well with the officers but the other two are always having rows with the mate.

With best love
from
your loving son
JAKE.

Please write often and long, it is letters like yours which keeps one going.

Well, she thought, reading this, he never said so much in his life.

She could not sit still to read it. Hervey came into the room and found her gripping the pages in a shaking hand. Her face was very red.

'What's the matter?' Hervey said.

'I can't leave that boy at sea,' she said. 'He's hating it.'

Hervey read the letter through. 'He doesn't say so anywhere,' she said, trying to comfort her mother.

'Don't be a fool, girl. I *know*,' the mother said.

His next letter told her.

We woke up on Christmas morning about 7.30 when we got up and had a cup of cocoa, the first cocoa I have had since I left home, and then put all the new flags up.

It had being very hot the night before so I had turned in on the setee, and just as I woke up and lay looking at the port I thought of you, and wished you all a 'Merrie Christmas.' It was a lovely day and we had quite a nice holiaday, but no feeling of Christmas about it.

We stayed at Rio for three days and then went up to Victoria, is supposed to be the prettiest place on the coast and is really very fine, we went right up a creak into a small harbour, with only one ship in, a German.

Well we stayed there a day and then went to Bahia, a two days run.

At Rio we took coffee and I was tallying all the time there, at Victoria we took coffee and I was tallying all day there, while at Bahia they only worked at night, and I was tallying first Cocoa, then timber, 200 sacks of wax, 300 bales of skins and a few feathers.

Now we are at sea on our way up to Trinidad. Last night gave my box a coat of paint and varnish, it being thick with rust outside, so I sandpapered it well and did it up and it looks very well.

I am ending after two days. It is Sunday and we arrived in

port about 1 o'clock this afternoon and have just finished working. We had to put two ropes and two wires out forehead and a wire and two ropes aft, and then heave all the derracks at Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5 holds up, each one to be made fast with two guys, then some of the hatches had to come off, but we are finished now so alls well what ends well.

Well my first voyage is drawing to a close and I do not like the life after 4½ months and if it is possible I want to get something on shore, I know what you must feel about having me back after the life I lead you before, but I think I have learnt a few of the lessons of life, here where we all have to help on another and everyone is civil.

If you think it better for me to stop out here I will, but I do want to come back and see if I cannt do better.

Now that we are only eight days run from New York, I am wondering what it is going to be for me, for I do not want to make another trip down here if I can help it, so when you write will you tell me what you think about it.

I miss you and everyone more every day now, and I would be only too glad to do anything. Now I must finish with best love to yourself and all at home, from

your loving son
JAKE.

With a sharpened dismay, she thought, Never, never since the day he was born, did he ask me to help him. Not until now. She saw his hand slowly forming words on the thin foreign notepaper, the wall behind him of his berth, his eyes, too watchful, clouded '. . . have learnt a few of the lessons of life . . .'

She did not know what to do. There was no question of bringing him home halfway through the voyage. She could not afford it.

She wrote to the office and asked when the *Burmese Star* was due home, and heard she was going back to the Plate from New York.

She wrote to him in New York and told him she couldn't do anything until he came home.

'Then we'll see,' she said.

He must have been disappointed. In his answer he said nothing more about leaving the sea. But he told her about a day off in New York.

I was invited up for the Sunday to Captain Unwins. I had to meet his son at the docks about ten o'clock and we went up in the elevated train to his house where we got warmed and went to church which started at 11.30. It was a very nice little church close by, much smaller than ours, it had a funny name the Epistical church I think they called it. It was a very simple service, quite similar to ours. Then we came back to dinner and in the afternoon we had a long walk on the hard snow, then we had tea and went to church again, then hot chocolate and biscuits and then the train down to the ship.

I hope little Carlin is better, I expect you are wondering how to plant the back garden again.

It will be too late to write to Rio when you get this, but not for Santos or Monte Video.

She had written to Russell when she wrote to the firm. She expected his ship would be in Santos with the *Burmese Star,* and she wanted him to know that she agreed with the boy. 'You needn't say anything to him,' she wrote. 'I was against this going to sea and if I can help him to something else I shall.'

His answer was a long rambling complaint. She would ruin the boy, she was foolish, the boy was well enough, it was a splendid life for him at sea. It would harden him. '. . . to my mind what he wants is hardening.'

He wants nothing of the sort, she thought bitterly. He wants a chance to help himself. She knew her son was not soft. If he wanted to leave the sea, it was not, certainly, because he was a coward.

But she had to write and tell Jake he must be patient. When she heard from him again, in late April from Buenos Aires, he had not seen his father, but Russell had written him the very letter she ought to have expected. She had only not expected it because for some years longer she kept alive a frail belief in Russell's essential decency. She would say to herself, He is mean, a liar, he wearies one to death groaning over himself saying no one appreciates him, but— The 'but' stood there for her listless feeling that because he was a good sailor, and brave enough, he must have some kindness in him. There must be a place in their life where she could rely on him not to try, as he did try, only to defeat her.

Her heart died in her as she read the boy's letter. Was learning what lesson?

Dear Mother

this is going to be my birthday letter so first of all I wish you many happy Returns of Your Birthday.

We arrived here on March 18th, and lay in the roads until the 20th when we came into Dock one. I expected Father would leave a letter here for me as I missed him at Santos, but he has not done so, I have only had one letter from him, the one I got at New York last September, written from New Orleans.

I wrote to Santos as soon as we arrived at Monte Video so that would be sure to catch him, as he is still at Santos.

I wonder what is the matter that he does not write, not even at Christmas.

We saw a great sight at Santos, two aeroplanes flying right above us, they seemed to be able to go where they pleased. They flew about the river for about ten minutes and then flew right out sight, over the hills. I was very pleased to see them, my first sight of these marvelous birds.

As it is now about 9.30 P.M. I must finish up for to-night, hoping you and everyone at home are all quite well and safe.

April 1st 1912

today is the 1st it will be just seven months tomorrow since I left England.

I and another of the boys went up to the office, for letters it being Sunday. I was very pleased to get both your two letters together. I am very sorry you have being down with Influnza again, and I hope you are quite better now.

I had a letter from Father the day before yesterday, posted from Santos, he said he was leaving Rio on the 31st March for New Orleans, and expected to be home about May 30th.

He said I would be no good on shore, and that whatever I went to I would not stick at it.

And that I would have no chance for anything except for a engineer or motor driver.

Taking all together he made it clear that now I am at sea I have got to stop there.

Perhaps after all he is right, there is very little in England for me, and nothing at all at Danesacre.

I have been wondering if it would not be better if it is possible to get work out of England somewhere, in the Colonies or the States.

But I will think for a couple of months yet, for I find that the longer you let anything lie, the better are ones views on it.

He enclosed me three pesos so I must write to New Orleans to thank him.

Yesterday was Palm Sunday, and as I had a very nice time I will describe the day, in the morning as I said we where up at the agents for the mail, but in the afternoon we went to the museum, which is in a beautiful park quite close to the docks. The things there was most of them pictures, and they were splendid, room after room of them, beautiful old pictures of all the Spanish admirals and generals, and the same of all the states down here.

There were some pictures which would be fully 25 × 15 yards, three in a room by themselves, each one covering a whole wall to itself, and the rooms are all big and lofty, the wall being covered with pictures and casts, the ceiling all exquisite plaster work, and the floor all tiled.

The big ones were battle pictures, of the many wars out here, and they must have taken years to paint. The next thing was about three hundred uniforms set up on figures in glass cases, these where all the noted mens uniforms for hundreds of years past, most of them where complete with sword, pistols.

They where a fine sight all the gay uniforms of the olden days, most being covered with medals.

Then came all the furniture, which I know you would love to see, beautiful old chairs and tables, desks and settes, all beautifully carved.

Half a dozen old battle standards, still all dirty from the battle field, and heeps of beautiful china.

We had not time to see much of the park. It was then half past four so we went up to the Bible class at the Mission, then we had tea there, everyone gets tea at the Mission on Sundays, sailors, firemen, officers and everyone.

After tea we sat and talked and read and then went to church which starts at 8.30 P.M. this may seem late to you but it is the most convenient time out here. As it was Palm sunday, there where no lights on, the church being lit by 12 large candles, all but 4 being round the minister and choir, so the church looked very fine, it being built entirely of stone, everything in it is stone but the pews, there being no varnished wood as in most churches.

In each pew there are two or three fans for the hot weather.

It was a very fine service and after it was over we went back to the ship after a very enjoyable day.

Be sure and write to Trinidad, for it is only a penny stamp there for newspapers or anything.

We spend a lot of time down the hold here, clearing up, piling dunnage up, making mats into bundles. And there is a lot of scraping and painting to do here. I have been tallying hay for the last two days.

I hope you will like this birthday card, I had to go all over the town for it and at last got it at the English Book Exchange.

I am putting a photo of the ship in.

I am very glad the bulbs have come up all right, and I hope the grass is getting thicker as hoped in your letter.

Well I must finish up now, but I will write and say what sort of an Easter I had. I only wish I could be home for it, but there does not seem to be much chance of getting home this summer.

With best love and best wishes for a happy birthday, and best love to Hervey and all at home,

from,
Your loving son
JAKE.

In his writing, still that of a careful child, the letter covered ten pages. He who so hated writing, and in talking always said as little as possible! He must, his mother knew, be lonely past all to sit writing and writing his little news.

What her husband had written to him vexed her so cruelly she was almost out of her head. To be so helpless. To have to sit here while he wrote the boy his heartless letters. It was too much. The blood knocking in her head made her giddy. She tried to calm herself, but she felt like beating her forehead against the wall. 'The mean beast he is,' she repeated. She walked up and down. 'What can I do? What can I do now?'

Without giving herself time to cool she wrote to Jake. 'Don't take any notice of your father saying you will be no good. I know you will do well, my little son. When you come home after this voyage you shall stay and we will find something for you. Keep your heart up. I will help you.'

She read the advertisements in the Yorkshire papers. She talked to the headmaster of his school about him. There seemed to be nothing he could do unless he were adequately trained. Where she was to get money from to train him for three or four years she did not know. She knew Russell would refuse to spend a penny on him.

In June Russell came home. He was hardly in the house

before she started on him about Jake. She couldn't hold it in, her mind was boiling with it.

'Why did you write to Jake he was no good?'

Russell frowned. 'That I never did,' he blustered.

'You did. You had no right to say such a thing. And the boy out there alone.'

'Ha, he's no more alone than I am,' Russell said.

'Oh, don't talk nonsense,' she said, losing what little patience she had with him. 'The boy's not fifteen—and he has been away almost a year.'

'No one ever worried themselves how long I was away,' Russell said. 'It's doing him no harm at sea. What is he to do if he comes home? You'd better let him be. As for telling him he was no good I didn't write such a thing, I tell you. I suppose I can write what I think fit. A boy's good for nothing until he's been knocked down a few times. He's better away from home at his age. Say I'd stopped at home—'

'I don't care a pin what would have happened if you'd stopped at home,' Mrs. Russell cried. 'I'm only asking you not to discourage the boy.'

'He's had his chance,' Russell said.

She had turned scarlet. Her eyes started at him. 'He has *not,*' she cried. 'Chance! What chance has he had? What have you ever done for your son?'

'Ha, I've toiled fifty years at sea to keep him and that other one.'

'Yes, you kept Jake at school until he was fourteen. As for Hervey, she keeps herself at the university, and you know it. You needn't think I don't hear how you tell people you've sent your daughter to college. You! A fine college she would have gone to if you'd been paying for it. Lies, lies, all lies. Well, here's your chance now to do

something. Fetch the boy home and educate him, then you can brag as much as you like about what you've done for them.'

She stopped, half choked by her detestation of him. She could have struck his face, his mouth drawn meanly in, his sunk bloodshot eyes. He is an old man, he is detestable, she thought. Then the thought seized her that he would be lying in her bed in an hour's time. She knew instantly what she was going to do. She left him eating his supper, and went upstairs, taking with her sheets and pillowcases, and took blankets out of the camphor chest, and made the bed up in the largest of the three bedrooms on the top floor. His enormous gladstone bag and another were in her bedroom. She dragged them to the upper room, painfully. Her body had not been strong since the birth of the third child; it hurt her to lift a heavy thing.

She went downstairs, and flung open the breakfast-room door, and stood in the doorway.

'Your bedroom is at the top,' she said quietly. 'I've moved your things up.'

Russell looked up bewildered. 'Eh?'

'You're sleeping upstairs, in the front room at the top. And I shall go to bed now. I'm tired.'

She went to her bedroom and locked the door. Her heart was still beating quickly, but she felt triumph and a curious pain. With her own hand she had shut up another room in her life. Now it seemed to her that her whole life had been only a matter of closing up one room after another. Until at last she would be left with one room and that a poor one.

She lay down. For a long time she did not sleep. She heard Russell pass her room on his way upstairs. He hesi-

tated outside her room. She thought he said something; she took no notice. What had he said?

When she slept, she was in a room with Jake, a baby, in her arms. And he was talking to her as if he were a grown man. She felt radiantly happy, because he was so clever, and because he talked to her in a gay free manner as though it were what would always be between them.

Before her husband went back to his ship she got a promise out of him. Jake was to decide for himself. If he wanted to leave the sea he could, and his father would make no trouble.

Promise or no promise, she did not trust him. When she saw from the paper that the *Burmese Star* and the *Southern Star* would be in Buenos Aires together in August, her heart sank. I know him and his ways, she thought. He'll shout at the boy until he gives way.

Jake wrote in August, and she saw how wide her fears had been off the mark. Russell had not bullied—he was too cunning—he had played on Jake's feelings.

Dear Mother,

I hope you are quite well. Father is going back to Villa Constitution tonight, where the *Southern Star* is.

Well, I told him I was going to stop and he seemed pleased, he got me a couple of Spanish books, a pair of best boots and a pair of working boots and rope slippers as I was rather short of foot gear, and a new cap.

He said I would have to have a new uniform, and that if we did not go home this trip, he would fetch it out on the *Southern*.

Father says there is a pretty good chance of us going home this trip, because of the bad frates to Santos owing to the strike there. But the most likest run of all is up to New York again.

On Tuesday afternoon we went up to one of the finest picture halls in the town, in Flores.

Then we went and had tea and cakes at the Victoria tea rooms, an English cafe perhaps you remember it?

We went up to the Gardens of Palarmo. We went for a long walk up Avenue de Mays and saw an enormous funeral procession, it must have been two miles long, it was a very old General. I am very glad I have seen Father and settled things up with him.

Please give my love to Grandmother Russell, Hervey and Carlin and best love to yourself, hoping to hear from you soon.

Father says you have been worrying yourself a lot over me, you must not do that for I will pull through alright.

With best love
from Your loving son
JAKE.

He came home next year. In April, 1913. He had been away nineteen months.

He came blundering into the house, carrying his stained bulging canvas bag. He put his arms round his mother awkwardly and kissed her.

'Well, my boy,' she said. 'Let me look at you.'

'I'm nothing to look at,' he said, with one of his rare smiles.

She had a meal ready for him. He talked away to her while he was eating it, told her about the places he had seen, and tales of the officers. Then he brought out his presents, a brooch for her, a book of views for Hervey, and a doll for Carlin. His hands grasping these things were like pieces of raw flesh, scarred, broken-nailed. They made her feel sick to look at them.

After his first flood of talk he dried up. He had no more to say than before he went away. He sat about the house, idly. Or he went out with her, or hung about by himself. He seemed to have no will to do anything.

He had grown and broadened. His face was thinner but it was childish still. His mother could see nothing behind his eyes.

When he had been at home a few days she said to him, 'What are you going to do? You don't want to go back, do you?'

He looked away from her. 'Is there anything I can do here?'

'Here? Do you mean in Danesacre?'

'In England.'

'We can try to find you other work. You might go back to school for a year.'

He had turned red. 'I can't do that.'

'Why not?'

'I couldn't.'

'Well, what can you do?' she said, half impatient with him.

Hanging his head, he mumbled, 'If there isn't anything —I mean—if you haven't heard of anything for me—I can stop at sea.'

He found it hard to speak to her, although he trusted her.

She felt guilty for a moment. The feeling that she had failed him. She did not allow the thought to form in her mind, If I had been reconciled with my mother he would be helped.

'I haven't thought of anything yet,' she said, staring at him with eyes like his own. 'But we shall find something.'

'Well, thank you very much for trying,' he mumbled.

In May Russell was at home again. She never knew whether he had spoken to the boy. But Jake told her one day that he would rather go back to sea than hang about waiting for some other chance to turn up.

It happened that the day he spoke to her she was in pain with her body. She felt old, the strength going out of her. She was afraid, as earlier in her life she would not have been afraid, to take on herself the responsibility of keeping him at home. She felt that a boy, if he is to be any good, must have something to do.

But for one thing she might have said, 'Stay and risk it.' Russell, with a great show of wanting to please her, said he could arrange for Jake to change to the *Southern Star.* She spoke about it to Jake.

'Do you want to be with your father?'

'Yes, that would be better,' he said slowly and childishly.

Mrs. Russell had misgivings. She knew that Russell didn't treat apprentices over kindly. On one voyage when she was with him, he would have had a boy with pneumonia out of his bunk and on deck if she had not interfered.

But after all, his own son, she thought. He had been kind to Jake in Buenos Aires.

'They'll be short trips in the *Southern,*' Russell said genially. 'And I can keep an eye on the boy and see he's all right.'

Father and son went off together at the end of May. In Russell's letters he never failed to tell her, 'The boy is well. I saw him just now on deck looks well eats well and sleeps well.'

Jake's letters were short. He rarely told her what he had been doing. She felt a vague unease.

Now she began openly in her thoughts to blame her mother. If she had been reasonable, she would think, Jake would be having the same chances as Clara's boy. She has behaved shamefully to me. It's abominable and unforgivable, her cruelty to us.

The letters her mother wrote to her in the second year of her marriage—letters she had not answered—were as sharp in her mind as if they had just been delivered. She had long since destroyed them, but she recalled even the look of the words on the page. Her lips moved, when she was sitting with one of Jake's letters in her hand, in a bitter barren argument. '. . . you thought I'd give in . . . you do everything for Clarry . . . my life, my whole life spoiled by you. . . .'

Without meaning to she had crushed up in her hand the single page of Jake's letter. She began hurriedly to smooth it out.

'Dear Mother . . .'

Chapter 20

She was pleased but not surprised when Hervey took her Honours degree—a First. She had prepared herself to be pleased by a Second Class, but the First was thoroughly satisfactory. She could smile kindly when people came up to her in the street and said, 'I see we must congratulate you on your daughter, Mrs. Russell.'

'Yes, she's done well,' she would say, calmly.

She went over to Leeds for the Degree ceremony in July. When she was packing her suitcase to go, she laid her Maltese scarf on top. It was unfashionable now, yet for some reason she still thought of it as extremely handsome, and she only wore it on state occasions.

Hervey noticed that she was wearing it. Her heart filled with love for her mother, and at the same time she felt tears behind her eyes. She ought to have had the chances I am having. Looking at her mother, she thought, I wanted this degree for you; yes, it was for you: I only imagined it was for myself I worked.

Mrs. Russell's face, the eyes with that remote inward stare, the pleased mouth, hurt her daughter as a phrase of music may hurt. As indeed one of those songs not able to be called music hurt, often.

Kind words can never die,
Cherished and blest . . .
Pull for the shore, sailor, pull for the shore . . .

In October of that year, her pride and satisfaction in her first-born was wounded—so deeply that it was years before she recovered from the wound. If she ever recovered completely.

Hervey was in London. She had allowed her without a qualm to go to London. She was living in rooms there with three friends of her own age, boys who had been at school with her, and studying with them in a college of London University. She had been given a research scholarship for a year. Now she wrote that she was going to marry a young man who had been a student with her in Leeds. She did not say, 'I should like to get married.' She wrote, 'I am going to marry.'

Mrs. Russell went up to London at once. On her journey she had no pleasant thoughts. This marriage was too like her own. She could not recall the blind impulse of the girl who had rushed into marriage in Dieppe, but she could still feel that it had been blind. Perhaps, *now* feel. She was appalled by the thought that the same stubborn folly now possessed Hervey. What have I done, she thought, to be punished like this?

She found it difficult to talk to the girl. Hervey was the same eager loving creature she knew. But when her mother tried to argue with her she ran against that stubbornness like a stone she thought of as having been born at the same time with her. She was reminded of the child that cried and disobeyed. There was still something childish in Hervey—in her face, in her awkward ways. She was twenty.

Mrs. Russell did not like the young man. His name, which she had never heard from Hervey before her letter, was Vane—Thomas Penn Vane. He had no money unless his father, who was a civil servant, chose to give him an

allowance— Mrs. Russell gathered that the Vanes were fully as vexed about the marriage as she was. He was three years older than Hervey. He had an affable pleasant manner, and the suavity of a man of the world. He took pains to make himself agreeable to her. But she couldn't like him. There was nothing she could formulate in a word and say, 'I don't like this.' Perhaps, she thought, exasperated, that is actually the trouble with him. He *has* no traits. For all his easy manners, his air of knowing his way about, he was without character. The most damning thing a Yorkshireman can say about man or woman.

He hasn't a quarter of the character of Hervey, Mrs. Russell thought, vexed.

She saw that the girl was blind to his faults—or his lack of faults. Mrs. Russell was not even sure that the young man had no faults. Now and again she thought he was sly.

She could have forbidden Hervey to marry. But simply by coming up she had put herself in a weak place. Hervey assumed she had come to see her married. She talked in a way that was unlike herself. She was quick, confident, almost boisterous.

'But what are you going to live on?' Mrs. Russell said.

'Penn wants to do journalism. He could be a schoolmaster. He has his degree, you know, and he's working now for a diploma. But I tell him I don't want him to turn into a schoolmaster. They're dull.'

'At least a schoolmaster can support his wife,' Mrs. Russell said drily.

'Oh, I shan't need supporting,' Hervey said quickly.

'Well, why not wait until he is earning money by his journalism? Or at least wait until he gets his diploma.'

Hervey smiled. 'Penn doesn't want to wait.'

'What Penn wants and what any sensible young man

would want appear to be flat opposites,' her mother said in a sharp jeering voice. She had been vexed by her daughter's smile with its air of some secret knowledge.

But she gave way. The mischief had been done, she thought. The girl was no longer herself. She was an echo of the young man. She tags after him like a puppy, her mother thought with contempt. If it was that way with her, she might as well marry and have done. She was done for, married or not married.

Mrs. Russell was tired. She had no energy now to oppose Hervey's obstinacy. Let the girl go her own way. If she had ruined her life, well, she had ruined it—and there was nothing to be done. She might come to something one day.

Hervey's future had suddenly become a burden the mother could not support in her arms. She let it fall into the girl's eager hands, and turned away. But she had a feeling of heaviness, and no pleasure to look forward to.

The marriage took place in a registry office. Mrs. Russell had not spoken to the young man about his family—she felt no interest in them and no wish to know them. Neither of his parents turned up at the wedding. When Hervey and her mother were in the cab driving to the registry office Hervey suddenly burst into tears.

'Come,' Mrs. Russell said, 'don't cry, Hervey. What's the matter?'

She can't turn back now, she thought, in dismay. She's gone so far, she must finish it.

'Nothing,' Hervey stammered, 'nothing. I don't know.' She struggled to stop her tears. They ran over her cheeks as though she had nothing to do with it—as though her body were crying in spite of her. 'I don't know.'

'Well, you must cheer up,' her mother said. 'You mustn't

get yourself into this state. I'm sure you'll be happy when you can settle down to a proper life with Penn.'

She wanted the girl to stop crying. When she was a child she used to cry herself into a speechless exhaustion. She really is uncontrolled, Mrs. Russell thought, half saddened, half impatient. But it was too late to stop the marriage. The effort and the responsibility were both beyond her.

She brought it on herself, she thought sadly. Obscurely and wordlessly she may have thought that Hervey deserved to be punished. She had behaved badly and foolishly.

Mrs. Russell was cruelly disappointed. Of all the hopes she had rested on Hervey, not one remained. What can be expected from a married young woman? For her mother, nothing.

Hervey quieted herself. Under her mother's eye she went through the wretched ceremony with an anxious shyness. Mrs. Russell tried to comfort her by the thought that she would have married sometime—and the young man seemed decent enough and was presentable. Her disappointment was not altered. And Hervey stood about after the ceremony like a lost dog—waiting for somebody to tell her what to do.

In Danesacre Mrs. Russell had to hide her disappointment and its bitterness. People came up to her in the street, the ironic look in their cold Yorkshire eyes, and said,

'So you went up to the wedding, did you? Fancy your Hervey being married. Do you like him, then?'

'He's a pleasant young man,' Mrs. Russell said, outfacing them, very civil.

'And what does he do? Will they be living in London?'

'He's a journalist. A very clever man,' she answered in a forbidding voice.

No acquaintance cared to press her beyond that. To one or two friends she said, 'Mind, I think she's far too young to marry. But she knows her own mind.'

'Ah, they do nowadays,' was the answer, with a short laugh, that defensive mocking harsh Yorkshire laugh, which jars on strangers.

Mrs. Russell echoed it, but she didn't laugh in her heart. She began now to think about Hervey as though she lived a long way away.

She turned more and more to three-year-old Carlin. She spoiled this youngest child, weak with her, gentleness itself, where she had been strict with the other two. It was partly that she believed Carlin was delicate. This was not true. But more that she had grown too tired to set her will against the stubborn will of this last child. The child Hervey had a young mother.

A letter Jake had posted in Buenos Aires in October reached her only a week before the *Southern Star* was due in to London. She read it with growing dismay. He had broken off in the middle of a brief account of going ashore at Villa Constitution to write, 'If you help me to get away from here I'll do anything, I'll work hard, I'll prove to you I'm some good.' Then went on with his little story of Villa Constitution as though he had never interrupted it.

He came home from London, a week before his father. She saw he was not like himself when he came in. He was thinner and taller, but it was not that changed him. He

was nervous. A sudden voice made him jump. He was sitting drinking tea with her in her room when Carlin rushed in, startling him so that he let his cup fall. Tea splashed on the carpet and on his chair.

Mrs. Russell exclaimed. 'Sit still,' she said, jumping up, 'you'll make worse of it.'

To her astonishment he began to cry. She had never seen him cry since he was a little boy and cried with rage. These were other tears. He tried to strangle them in his body, which shook dreadfully. His face became the face of the child.

'It doesn't matter,' his mother said, 'come, come, it doesn't matter in the least, there's no harm done. Come, you're tired, you shall have a bath and go to bed soon. There, there.'

She spoke to him as if he were a child, and for less than a moment she was a young woman. But she felt uncertain, as she never felt when she was young.

The second night he was at home she thought she heard him shout. She got out of bed and went up the stairs to his room. She was alone in the house with him and Carlin. Opening his door gently, she saw him in the light from the landing, asleep, hands clenched above his head. She touched him. He was soaked in sweat in the cold night.

He opened his eyes.

'It's all right,' she said quickly and gently. 'It's only me. I thought I heard you call.'

'What's the time?' he asked thickly.

'Time for a long sleep,' she said. 'Shut your eyes and go to sleep. If you want anything I shall hear. I shall always hear.'

He did not answer. She thought he was going off to

sleep again. She closed his door and stood for a few minutes on the landing. The darkness and silence of the house closed round her; she felt strangely cut off, both from her son and from living. She went down to her room, and lay in bed trying to persuade herself that nothing was wrong.

In the morning when she was out she saw the doctor's carriage outside his house and the doctor stepping into it. Obeying an impulse she asked him to come and look at Jake. He did that, and told her,

'The boy has had a bad time or a shock. His nerves are shot to pieces. No boy of sixteen—is he?—ought to be in his state.'

'He was sixteen four months ago.'

'Well, he needs looking after.'

She spoke to Jake. 'Did you have a hard time this voyage?'

He avoided her eyes. 'It wasn't bad,' he mumbled. 'But I don't want to go back. Or perhaps I could get another ship.'

'You shan't go back,' she said instantly. 'There's no question of that.'

'I'm not lazy, I'll work,' Jake said. He turned very red. 'I'm not a good-for-nothing. There must be *something* I can get.'

'Of course there is,' his mother said warmly. 'And I know you're not lazy.'

She sat still, her face working. Something happened to him during the voyage, she thought. His father did something to him.

'You didn't like the *Southern Star,* did you?' she said.

He cleared his throat. 'No, not much,' he said awkwardly.

'Why didn't you?'

'Oh, well, I don't know. I didn't care for it.'

She was afraid to press him. He was shaking. She felt anger against her husband pierce her. What did he do to him on this trip? I shall never find out. There would be no one to interfere. His kindness that time in Buenos Aires —he was showing off, he wanted the other captain to see how well he treated his son.

When Russell came home she told him, coldly, what the doctor had said about Jake. He listened with an astonished air.

'Ha, I don't know what's the matter with th' boy,' he said. 'There was nothing wrong with him on the trip. You make too much fuss over him. It's not good for him. If you take my advice you'll—'

'I'll neither take your advice, nor do I want to hear it,' she said in a voice from which the hate turned back to strike through her own head.

Russell felt it like a blow. He got up uneasily and hurried out of the room, only calling over his shoulder,

'Have it your own way. When you've spoiled th' boy you'll remember I told you.'

'There's a good deal I could remember if I chose,' she said. She went after him to the door. 'And don't you nag the boy about leaving. He's leaving the sea because *I* say he is to leave. Remember that.'

Russell was almost running upstairs. 'I'll not speak to him,' he shouted. 'I'll speak to no one.' She heard him still chuntering to himself at the top of the stairs: he slammed the door of his room.

She went back into the sitting-room. She was trembling and her heart pounded. I shall never forgive him, she said, never, I shall never forgive him.

CHAPTER 21

AFTER this quarrel Russell seemed anxious to conciliate her. She on her side tried, once more, to feel kindly towards him. She was thankful he had his own room and seemed content to stay in it. He was busy there with screws and a hammer one day. When he had gone out she went in and found he had screwed up two of the drawers in the wardrobe.

'What have you been doing to your wardrobe?' she asked him later.

'I don't want that woman turning my papers over when she does the room,' he said quickly.

'I'm sure she wouldn't lay a finger on your papers,' she said, laughing at him. 'Have you any that are so important? However, if you like to unscrew the drawer every time you want to get at them yourself—and spoil the wardrobe—'

'It hasn't taken any harm,' he said defensively.

When he went back to his ship she went with him, to London. She wanted to see Hervey.

Hervey was reading in the British Museum for her research thesis. She came to meet her mother at Buszard's, and talked away during lunch about her work. Mrs. Russell thought she looked thin and gawky, more the schoolgirl than the married woman.

'And what is Penn doing?' she asked.

'Oh, he's still trying to get work as a journalist,' Hervey

said eagerly and quickly. 'It takes some time, you know. He's seeing somebody next week.'

After lunch they visited the shops. Pleased as always to view without buying, Mrs. Russell walked until she was tired out and Hervey, with no excitement to keep her up, pale and with a dirty face—she rubbed her hands across it when she was bored. They had tea and Mrs. Russell said,

'Now I should like to see your rooms. I like to know the place where you are living, then I can imagine you there.'

Hervey hesitated. 'We only have one room. It's rather a long way out. It's at Shepherd's Bush.'

'Well, how far is that? How do you go home? By bus?'

She saw that Hervey was not anxious to show her the place, and that made her the more determined to see it. There must be something wrong.

They went by bus. She was horrified first of all by the street, almost a slum street. Talking gaily, Hervey led her into a shabby house, the walls grimed, and by a black staircase into a small room almost entirely filled by the bed. There was a chest of drawers, a cupboard, a little light table piled with books. London dirt had soaked into it for so endless a time that the colour of everything, walls, carpet, bed-cover, was the same dark indeterminate brown. Mrs. Russell's heart sank to think of her child living in so squalid a place.

She drew a chair into the window and sat there, looking out at the stale street. She did not say anything. She could not. When Hervey showed her the cups and pan she had bought to make cocoa for supper she compelled herself to smile slightly.

'Yes, yes, very useful,' she said.

She never spoke to anyone about the condition in which

Hervey was living in London. When people asked her, 'And did you see Hervey?' she would say smiling, 'Yes. And she seems quite happy. She and her husband are living in rooms, she's working on her thesis and they don't want to have the trouble of a house—yet.'

Poor shifts for her disappointment. She had expected so much from her clever daughter. All had come to nothing, the success in examinations, the 'congratulation lilies' given for each, journeys to and from school, promises, the measured-out praise of dons. Her cleverness was nothing, would after all come to nothing. She began to try to think, Never mind that if she is happy. That was no use. She couldn't suppose Hervey was happy in that room. And if she must think of her as any ordinary married young woman, it was even more horrible. Not even to have a home!

She looked at Carlin and thought, You would die in such a place. It never occurred to her that Hervey could die. Unconsciously, she expected from this eldest child a stoicism greater than her own.

At the end of that year Russell's stepmother died of a stroke. When Mrs. Russell moved to her new house the old woman had exclaimed, 'Well, if you can move, I can.' She never did. Once a week Mrs. Russell went to see her and stood twenty minutes or half an hour, reluctant to sit in the room smelling of the old woman's dry breath, the stained silk dresses, and the open bottle of port with its glass jar of biscuits. Mrs. Edward's tongue, her scandalous tongue, clattered in her head as if the devil were ringing her. She sat in her chair and poured out lies, questions, insults, with the same calm.

When she had her stroke she became dumb. Not a word could she say; scarcely a sound came out of her throat: after the first few days not even a sound.

Her hair was still black (she was seventy-five)—while she lay in bed it was knotted into a tight pigtail by the nurse. She seemed very small, her face shrunken, pierced by two holes for her eyes. These eyes were alive; they moved. When Mrs. Russell bent over her, they implored her.

The nurse standing at the other side of the bed spoke of her as though she were insensible. 'She . . . she . . . she . . .'

'. . . I washed her back this morning, Mrs. Russell. Upon my word, I don't believe she's washed since she was a baby. I've never in my life seen skin like it—'

'That will do,' Mrs. Russell said sharply.

'Oh, she doesn't hear anything,' the woman said.

'Never mind. I'd rather you said downstairs anything you have to say.'

The woman left the room, offended. The next day, when Mrs. Russell came, she could not at first grasp the change in the silent creature in the bed. She seemed to have faded, to make less impression on the pillow. She was vaguely ridiculous. Suddenly Mrs. Russell saw what had happened—the pigtail and the hair drawn thinly over the scalp were white.

'Her hair,' she exclaimed. She could have bitten her tongue out. She saw from the nurse's expression that she had been waiting for this moment.

'I've washed it.'

Mrs. Russell did not answer. She looked at the old woman's sharpened nose, at the lips without teeth, the imploring eyes. They were less eyes than they had been. Now

they were the points to which the retreating life of the skeleton attached itself, with all the vices, the instinctive virtues, and the frail childish pleasures that had existed only by means of that life. It was a defeat she was watching, drawn out, but certain. She turned away.

On her way home she thought of Mrs. Edward with pity. To lie there like that, not able to speak. It was terrible. A tremor seized her, reaching to the depths of her being. She was forced to stand still until her courage returned. The street about her, even the fence she gripped, were unreal.

She suspected the nurse, and coming quietly up the stairs one morning she heard her scolding and abusing the old woman as she straightened her bed. Mrs. Russell went into the room and said,

'Nurse, if you can't speak civilly to Mrs. Edward you'll have to leave, it won't do.'

Her voice intimidated the woman.

Next day Mrs. Edward Russell died. She left two thousand pounds divided between her stepsons. The younger was not living in the town now, and didn't give himself the trouble to write except about some spoons he said his stepmother had promised him. The brothers wrangled by letter. Russell spent hours copying and recopying pages of stuff his wife declined to take an interest in.

She begged him to buy shipping shares with his thousand. They were down to nothing. One Danesacre firm was hawking theirs about the town without finding a buyer. It was inconceivable to Sylvia Russell that shipping shares were worthless. She knew in her bones that they must recover. And now if ever was the time to buy.

'To my mind they're not worth buying,' Russell said. 'If they were worth anything Smithson wouldn't be offer-

ing to sell. See?' He laughed complacently. 'I know what to buy.'

'Well, what are you going to buy?' Mrs. Russell asked.

It seemed 'a friend' had advised him to put his money abroad, in Russia. The thought flattered him. He was the sort of man who suspects any advice except that of strangers.

'You and your friends!' his wife said. 'Some man you met for half an hour in London, I suppose. You'll be a fool to put money in Russia. Anything might happen to it.'

Russell's face set in lines of peevish obstinacy.

'I tell you this man is a very clever fellow indeed. He advises the—er—bankers and people of that sort. The Bank of England. He knows what he's talking about.'

'Well, you'll lose your money,' his wife said wearily.

She had no patience to bother with his lies.

Jake went away early in January to a wireless school in Manchester.

Hervey came home. She had been ill in London. The shape of her face was becoming definite behind the blurred adolescent uncertainty. She was still, at twenty, very immature. Her forehead held together a face in which eyes, nose, and mouth were at war. The eyes clouded and staring; the large mouth, intelligent and slightly sensual; the short delicate nose.

Her husband had given up trying to become a journalist. He was staying with his parents until he found a post in a school. Hervey spoke about him very little.

She worked revising the draft of her thesis. When she first came Mrs. Russell put a large table in her room to hold her papers. She was glad the girl was at home. With-

out thinking that she was interrupting her she went into her rooms a dozen times an hour. She was used to Hervey's smiling attention. She liked her to leave her work and go with her to the shops in the morning. In the afternoon they went for what Mrs. Russell called 'the round'—across the fields for half a mile and back by the lane. It was a mild January: early morning mists stayed in the grass all day in bright drops; the earth was moist under the hedge, under the yellow colts-foot. Mrs. Russell had taken this walk hundreds of times since she came to this house. It never tired her. Why should it? Her feet had not to be told which crack in the flagged path was too deep to step on, and her hand avoided easily splinters in the rail running beside the steep rise of steps in one field. Generations of hands had polished the rail, but it was worn here and there.

She knew Hervey would leave when her husband got a post, but she refused to think about it. One morning Hervey had a letter from a woman in London, the editor of a weekly paper for which she had written two articles, offering her a job on the paper. The salary was two pounds a week. Hervey wrote off instantly, accepting. She was madly happy to have found work.

'But the money is very little,' Mrs. Russell said.

'It's a start. And I shall be in London.'

Mrs. Russell did not say anything. How eager she is to go away, she thought bitterly. And I shall be alone. She felt tired and empty. There was nothing to look forward to except Carlin's growing up. In her heart she knew already that Carlin would never stay with her. At this moment of despair there seemed nothing in her life; it was no more than doing the same things day after day, with an intolerable loneliness.

In the afternoon, when Hervey was making toast, she said,

'So next week at this time you'll be gone.'

'Well, I should have had to go sometime,' Hervey said slowly.

'Yes, but I never thought you'd be going so soon.'

'I shall often be coming back,' Hervey mumbled.

'That's no comfort when you're going now, m'little dear. I thought you'd be here at least until April. I shall be very sad and sorry without you.'

She saw the look of anxiety settling itself in the girl's face. The eyes stared fixedly, and the long line of the jaw came forward. With sudden hope she thought, She might even give it up and stay. Let her go, if she must, in April. But stay now. She wanted this blindly, as if it were the only thing in her life.

'It's dull days here by myself,' she said smiling. 'Dull bad days. And no kind Hervey to bring me a cup of tea in the mornings.'

Hervey got up, her face reddened by the fire. She watched her mother crossing the room to draw the curtains and saw how slowly and heavily she walked.

'Are you tired?' she said.

'No,' Mrs. Russell said. 'But my body's not right, you know.'

'What do you mean? Why is it not right?'

'It's never been right since Carlin was born, I don't suppose it ever will be.'

This was true, but she would never have spoken about it if she had not been thinking about herself sorrowfully as a finished old woman (she was forty-six).

'Why don't you see the doctor?' Hervey said quickly.

'Oh, I can't bother with doctors.'

She watched the girl's face during tea. It had never been an easy face to read, but she knew most of the signs. She was almost sure Hervey would stay with her. But not sure enough to make her relief less overwhelming when the girl said,

'Well, I could stay, you know.'

'But you wrote and accepted, didn't you?' she said quietly.

'I can easily write again.'

Hervey was covering her disappointment by speaking in an offhand slovenly way. Mrs. Russell said gently,

'But if you think you ought to go . . .'

'Oh, they won't mind, and I shall get another chance somewhere else.'

Mrs. Russell felt a faint pang of regret. Then she thought easily, It was a miserable job. Two pounds! She would have starved herself again until she was ill.

'Well, I'm sure I'm very glad you're not going,' she said warmly. 'It makes all the difference when you're here, my love.'

Hervey smiled at her.

After tea Hervey said, 'You never sing nowadays.'

'My voice is no good now,' she said firmly. She felt a sudden excitement. She watched with a pleased interest while Hervey turned over the songs in the music stool. Protesting, she let herself be led to the piano. Her fingers, swollen and uncertain, struck the first notes—

'In old Madrid, long years ago . . .'

She stopped. 'No, I've forgotten it,' she said, vexed.

'Sing this one,' Hervey said.

Mrs. Russell looked at the page she had spread open.

An emotion half nostalgic, half warm with consoling joy, seized her. I can read this. She began uncertainly:

'Once in the dear, dead days beyond recall,
When on the world the mists began to fall . . .'

Her voice rose, swelling its notes. The foolish worthless song—she did not feel it was worthless—pleased and soothed her, recalling moments when she was happy. Happiness, for her, had always to do with a definite object: it was a bed of dahlias in Hyde Park; it was the particular corner of a street in Antwerp; a feather boa; the schoolroom in her mother's house at the instant when the curtains were being drawn over the shadowy reflection of the fire in the darkness outside.

What strength in my voice, she thought.

'. . . Just a song at twilight
When the lights are low,
When the flickering shadows
Softly come and go . . .'

'You see, you can sing as well as ever,' Hervey said.

'Oh, well,' she said, putting it off with a gesture of her hand, the gesture the same, the hand and wrist changed past recognition.

Chapter 22

The telegram from Jake came in February. 'Joined the Flying Corps. Letter follows. Jake.'

After a day of anxiety, talks with Hervey, with Mr. Hanover, her mind turning this way and that, perplexed, his letter told her very little. The Flying Corps wanted wireless operators and he was eligible, but she or his father would have to agree to it. He was not yet seventeen.

'This,' he wrote, 'is a chance for me. It is the best chance I shall ever have to get on. There is a future for me in the Flying Corps and I want to take the chance, I want to make good.'

'I shall go to Manchester and see him myself,' Mrs. Russell exclaimed. He has rushed into this, she thought. She was agitated.

'Let me go,' Hervey suggested. She thought she would be closer to Jake's mind.

'No. I must go myself,' Mrs. Russell said sharply.

During the journey she sat sunk in her half-bitter thoughts. I can do so little for him, she thought.

He met her at the Central Station. She saw him while he was still watching the crowds with that steady remote stare. His hands, red, thick, and childish, were clenched as though he had run.

'Mother, it's all right,' he said awkwardly. 'There's nothing to worry about. The best thing is for you to talk to Mr. Griffith. He advised me to go into the Flying Corps.

It's a good thing for me, I'm lucky they're taking in men now.'

Men! she thought. She walked beside him, he bending his head to stare at her, his hand sketching clumsy ashamed gestures.

'Mr. Griffith,' she said. 'He's the head of the wireless school, isn't he?'

Jake smiled faintly. 'It's his school, and he's the instructor.'

'Is the school open on Saturday, then?'

'He kept it open purposely to see you. He's a very good chap. Will you have a rest first? You mustn't get tired.'

'I'd rather see him at once,' Mrs. Russell said.

The school, with its imposing name, 'Northern Wireless School,' turned out to be two small rooms in a shabby office building. She was startled. The lift was not running; she had to walk up eight flights of stairs and Jake watched her anxiously.

A young man, thin-faced, dark, jumped up smiling as she came in. The room was an attic, with desks, a gas fire, a window looking on a gutter.

'Come in, Mrs. Russell. Do sit down. I'm afraid we've no comfortable chairs. Jake, old chap, it's no good, you can't stop the fire hissing, I've tried. We only noticed today what a noise it makes, Mrs. Russell, when we knew you were coming."

'Please don't trouble,' Mrs. Russell said drily. 'It doesn't worry me.'

She saw Griffith glance quickly at Jake. She trembled. She was defeated, of course. They were against her, her son and this young man, their certainty against her dry ignorance. Whatever she said, they had their answer.

Griffith began to talk to her about the Flying Corps: it

was the coming thing: where there were six squadrons there would shortly be sixty. 'Or even more, Mrs. Russell. It's bound to grow. Anyone going in now has a splendid chance. I advised Jake to try for it—'

'You thought you could take that on yourself.'

The young man glanced at her and glanced away. 'I did. I'm sure I'm right.'

'How old are you?' she said, unmoved.

'I?' He laughed. 'Twenty-six.'

Jake spoke for the first time. 'It's the only way I can get into the Flying Corps,' he said. 'If I had the money I could go in to be a pilot—'

'What will you be?' she interrupted.

'He'll start as a Second-class Air Mechanic, Mrs. Russell. What he'll end as depends on him. If I know Jake, he'll do well.'

'It's my chance,' Jake said. He moved his fingers. 'I must take it.'

Mrs. Russell looked at Griffith. Her mouth worked. 'Are you *sure* it's a good thing for him to do? Remember he's only sixteen years old. I don't know anything about the Flying Corps.'

The young man leaned forward. 'You can take my word for it,' he said, with grave quick-tongued energy. 'It's a splendid thing.'

She looked at Jake's face. 'If you're sure you want to do it.'

He smiled: ashamed to let them see what he felt.

'I know I can get on this way,' he mumbled.

She saw him look at Griffith. They persuaded me, she thought.

She had very little time in Manchester. Jake looked up at her when she was in the train, his face unsmiling,

smooth, the long mouth pressed firmly. Immature. You wouldn't know how much he had been through.

'Thanks for coming,' he said hurriedly. 'I hope it hasn't tired you very much.'

'I can rest in the train.' She kissed him, bending from the window. 'Take care of yourself, my love.'

'Oh, I shall be all right.'

'Write to me how you get on. I shall look anxiously for letters.'

'Goodbye.' He walked with the train, looking at her. 'This is going to be a good thing for me, mother. A chance to show I'm good for something.'

'Goodbye, goodbye.'

She sank into her corner, dropping her lids against the light from the electric bulb that split her eyeballs. Your chance, she repeated bitterly. What chance have you had, my poor child? If your grandmother . . . Anger against her mother seized her: she felt something, a brittle jet of light, explode soundlessly in her brain. She knows I have a son. If she had ever offered to do anything for him . . . Money lavished on Clara's boy, horses to ride, Eton, everything he wants, and for mine, my son, nothing, nothing. Nothing. The sheer wickedness of it. After this there's no forgiveness, I shall not forgive her.

She dozed. It seemed to her that someone came into the empty compartment, and sat close to her. She knew it was her mother, but the face was indistinct, she felt it rather than saw it. An extraordinary sensation of peace, peace of the most joyful kind, possessed her. There were no problems. There was nothing for her to do, she could live as gaily, lightly, easily as she pleased, throw her arms out and float in the warm darkness, run. She was saved. And

yet tears were running down her face. 'Let me stay here,' she begged.

Her head dropped forward and she woke, starting. The carriage was empty, her eyes dry as a bone, hot anger under her hand.

Hervey left her in March, to go to Kettering. Her husband was going to teach there. Now Mrs. Russell did not try to keep her—a wife must go to her husband when he can give her a home—but she was very sorry. Sorry that the girl was going, sorry she was married, sorry, above all, to be left with no proper company.

Her father died at the end of April. It was a shock, but did not cut. She had seen him seldom, he was old; he had only a small place in her mind, and that not his own, but the person's she had put there. Hugh Hervey's sceptical fastidious mind was never entered but by himself.

Clara sent her the news. A week later she came herself. When she was telling over all the particulars of illness and funeral and the rest of it she began crying.

'Sylvie, if you'd seen her when he died. I don't care what you say. Whatever she's done you did the first wrong thing. Sylvie, do write to her now. I *know* you ought to.'

'Then you know more than I do,' Sylvia Russell said.

She thought Clara was behaving in a ridiculous and unreasonable way. She was exaggerating, as usual. And, as usual, she had no common sense, no decency in giving way to her emotions. She has no right, Sylvia Russell thought, offended, to tell me what I ought to do.

'I don't want to have anything to do with her,' she said.

'How can you talk about her like that?' Clara murmured. 'You're cruel.'

Her anger sharpened. She looked pitilessly at Clara's face, swollen by her tears, at her disheveled hair. You're talking like an idiot, she thought.

'Cruel?' she said. 'Cruel? What is she, then? All these years I might have lived anyhow, in any misery, for all she knew. I don't want to see her again. I hate her, she's overbearing, selfish, a detestable woman. Why should I do anything for her? What has she done for me, or Jake, or any of us? It's no use your looking at me like that. I tell you I hate her. You'd better not talk about her.'

Clara could not, if it was to save her life, have said another word. She was appalled by this revelation of her sister's mind. Of her life! How unhappy she must be, she thought simply, to feel like that. She knew herself that she was clumsy and muddleheaded, yet she felt superior to this passionate undisciplined creature. Poor Sylvie! Even when she was a child she always wanted to punish other people for her own faults. I'm afraid of her, Clara Roxby thought, and I do love her, it's my duty to love her; but I'm very, I'm extremely glad I'm not her.

Chapter 23

That year, in May, 1914, she was in Antwerp. It was, though she did not know it, the last time she would step out of the dark side-street into the Place Verte, into the sunlight dazzling the baskets of the flower-women, into the shadow, black, clotted, deep, of the cathedral; the last time she would walk, less swiftly than in earlier years, but not less gladly and eagerly, from shop window to café table and thence to the plain green garden and thence to a white boulevard of houses, the shuttered windows with their outer mirrors pleasing her, by some promise, the fulfilment not in words and not now.

She had been here alone and with Hervey. She half thought she might come on the captain's young wife and her little girl sauntering in any street. She looked out for them. She was rewarded only by a word, a gesture, sketched in one corner of the large canvas the foreign park, the sky, the gay lovable streets.

If Hervey were here I should be perfectly happy, she thought. She meant, If I were young, if my body were still tireless, if all I expected had not come in the end to a need for comfort, a face, hands, a body that is not mine.

She was at home again in June. In another month, towards the end of July, Hervey came with her husband. He had been ill in Kettering, and in the meantime he had got a better post in Liverpool and they would go there at the end of the summer. Hervey fussed over him anx-

iously, but her mother thought she was unsettled, bored. She spoke very sharply to her about the way they lived, living in comfortless cheap rooms.

'It's a disorderly way of living.'

'But I don't want the bother of a house,' Hervey said stubbornly. 'I hate all that business of possessions and domesticity.'

'Don't be a fool,' Mrs. Russell said. 'You talk like a fool.'

She worried over these signs of the girl's instability and queerness.

She no longer expected anything of Hervey. It was Jake now, Jake she thought of when she thought of the future. In some way he would distinguish himself. She was certain.

He came home a day or two after Hervey. It was the first time she had seen him in his Flying Corps uniform. It was clumsy, and he in it a clumsy boy. But in the way he talked she heard, the first time, a young man speaking.

'You see, it's the right thing at last. It makes you feel you're in something where you have a chance. You're not ordered about like we were on the ship, as if we were nothing at all. They expect you to know your job. And the officers talk to you. I've been up with one officer, Captain Renny, several times. He said sometime I ought to learn to fly. He said he would help me if things turned out there was a chance for me learning.'

'How would there be a chance?' his mother asked.

Jake looked at her, ducking his head. 'There's always changes going on,' he said. 'That's why it's a piece of luck I went in now, when everything's as you might say possible.'

He was sitting in her room, his feet, in thick boots, wide apart, hands sprawled on his knees. His blue clouded eyes did not meet hers. He was ashamed of his ambitions.

'If only I had some money,' Mrs. Russell said. She clenched her hands.

'It doesn't matter,' he said. 'I shall get on all right. You'll see, mother. I'm going to do well.' He hesitated, and looked at his thick hands. 'I shall be able to do something for you one of these days. I've been a disappointment to you in the past—but I shan't this time, you'll see. You shall drive in your carriage some day.'

'Well, that will be something,' Mrs. Russell laughed.

Her heart had turned in her when he was talking. His ambitions were as preposterous as if he had said, I want to be the greatest man in the world. She was proud, she was anguished. She was cruelly afraid of disappointment for him. Yet she knew, she knew, he was different from others. He would do something, he would be someone. With passion, she thought, Let him not be disappointed. Passion of belief, of the doubt flowing in her veins.

He had been at home a week, less. Then he was recalled. The papers were talking about the danger of war. The talk began abruptly, stealthily. From a paragraph it crept into half a column. Then suddenly, leaped across the page.

Mrs. Russell had just taken a cake out of the oven when the telegram came, recalling Jake. She let it cool under the scullery window while she helped him to pack his things. He was excited. It showed only in his voice.

'I hope there isn't war,' Mrs. Russell said.

'I might get a chance if there was,' he said, quickly. 'It might be the very thing for me, mother. You'll see, they'll be taking in new men, but us old ones will have the start. That officer I was telling you about, Captain Renny, said something of that to me.'

She watched his red bony fingers, short fingers like her own, pulling the laces of his boots. His flushed face turned

up to her, smiling. She saw a boy, an infant, looking at her with a red face; he smiled, but his brows were drawn together in a frown. He used to say, 'Am I forced?' when she told him to do a thing. If she said, 'No, you're not forced, Jake,' as like as not he did it. He cried with anger when she whipped him. He had once given her for her birthday a penny loaf with a tulip stuck in it. She forgot, nothing reminded her, that she had not thanked him; because it was a mean present. He would not be nursed when he was a baby; he threw himself off her knee and sat on the floor.

'Still,' she said slowly, 'a war . . .'

She did not finish. No image of war presented itself. The Boer War? There must have been men from Danesacre in that—she couldn't remember one.

'I ordered the cab,' she said.

She took the cake out of its tin, wrapped it up, and put it on the top of his bag.

'I shall come with you to the station.'

He leaned out of the window to grip her hand as the train moved. He was smiling, a sheepish grin. He was not at ease, even with her. She knew a little what thoughts were behind the rounded forehead, but not all. He was secretive, hiding in himself. Shame, the shame of his ambitions, thickened his tongue.

'Goodbye, thank you for the cake.'

'Goodbye, my love, goodbye.'

When war was certain—she read the news first in the paper with her first tea—she had one instant of agony. The tea, she sipped it mechanically, did not taste. Hervey had said something to her as she set tray and paper on the bed. She didn't answer. It was irrelevant.

Her strong senses reasserted themselves—with the pro-

tective apathy we human beings, even mothers, display, when it is not happening where we can see it, towards our practice of butchering each other. She did not think Jake would be killed. Other sons, of other women. But not hers. He was part of her body. One can't imagine the moment in which a limb will be cut off, still less a son.

Going out to the shops she passed Mr. Hanover walking slowly, very slowly. She greeted him. He looked up unsmiling.

'A sad day, Mrs. Russell.'

'Yes,' she said.

'I feel this is the end of England.' He added hurriedly, 'I don't fear we shall be defeated. But the England we knew, I loved, has been defeated. Nothing will be the same. This is a hideous crime.'

She was surprised he spoke in this exaggerated way. 'Oh, well, there have been other wars,' she said coldly.

'Yes, of course.' He hesitated, looking into her face. 'And your boy? Jake.'

'He was recalled last week.'

'How old is he?'

'He'll be seventeen in just over a fortnight,' Mrs. Russell said.

'Ah, then they won't send him to France yet.'

'I haven't heard,' Mrs. Russell said quietly.

She heard in less than a week.

. . . when you get this I shall be on my way to France. They say we're joining up with the French army, I don't know, Captain Renny is not going, he is very disappointed, they want him in London, he says he'll fit up to come out to us if they let him. I hope you are well, we finished the cake up last night, it was exelent. I must close now, From your loving son, Jake.

At first the War was something going on at a distance, not clearly understood. Mrs. Russell read the paper carefully, taking it up from time to time during the day, but she could not see anything behind the words. The names of places meant nothing to her. When she thought of guns it was of a pair of Boer War guns, mounted in front of the barracks—which had been a mill when she first knew it and still, whenever she passed it, reminded her queerly of days in the country with Jake a fat short-legged child. She could not picture any larger number of guns in action. Besides, 'in action' only meant Jake—and what Jake was doing eluded her. Sometimes at night she lay awake and thought of him as in the next room. His boy's face, his boy's clumsy red hands, were clear as day, but she could not recall details of his uniform, and this worried her. In the morning she glanced into the room with a strange sense that she had forgotten something she would find there. There was nothing. She straightened a chair, a cover, and came out. The house, for a moment, was unfamiliar.

Slowly, none of them making any mark at the time, things happened altering the hue of life. It was a subtle, almost imperceptible stain, spreading, deepening.

New thick curtains for the windows. Darkened streetlamps making it bad walking from evening service. Rumours, passed from the mouths of old men with telescopes on the cliff. A woman in new black, with reddened eyes, talking in the street. . . . 'Yes, Thursday it was. I saw the telegraph boy through the window and I said, Oh Will I said it's Joe, he said, No it isn't, don't get upset, and then he opened it.' . . . Young men, the sons of neighbours, unfamiliar in khaki, closing the door, stepping briskly towards the station as once to school past

trees, the walls of gardens, old steps, the glimpse of the quay.

In November Jake made his first stroke.

Wireless Unit
R.F.C. B.E. Force
November 4th 1914

Dear Mother,

I hope you are quite well I was very pleased to heer from you. Thank-you very much for your letters the first one must have got lost. I have also received two parcels from you full of many good things. I am attached to the 48th battery R.G.A. working a small wireless receiving set and it is only when I go back to our base that I get your letters I expect when I go back next I will find some waiting for me.

It is getting very cold here now especially in the mornings. You will be pleased to here that I got the medal which is called in France the Medaille Militaire, Medal Military, and seems to be very highly prized by them. I got it for working the wireless in an aeroplane over the German lines, a shell from one of their anti-aircraft guns exploded near us and blew part of our inlet valve away and wounded the pilot. This was on our great retreat of which you have read so much. The pilot was Lieut Lewis now a Captain and he is doing some very fine work with the wireless. The medal was given by the French Government and presented by General Henderson.

The war seems to be getting on very slowly much slower than I expected.

There is a heavy fog hanging about today and things very quiet I am still in the best of health and I am surprised to see how quickly we have got used to this kind of life. You will be pleased to heer I am Corporal now, Cpl Russell.

There is one thing when we do get back we will get a nice long holiday so let us hope it will be in the Spring. Looking at my pay book today I noticed I had over ten pounds to draw.

Well I must close now hoping to see you before long, with best love to yourself and all at home from

JAKE.

He has done *well,* she thought. She was not surprised. She would have liked the whole story. Later on, at a time when she was putting this letter and others in a cardboard shoe box, and writing on the lid 'Letters from Jake,' she heard about it. Even then, because of her ignorance of flying, of war, of all that, she did not realise what a remarkable show he had pulled off. Best to speak here the language of the day: it may be forgotten.

Chapter 24

So that first winter went. Spring came slowly, with the stain of war deepening, still unnoticed for what it was. It was as if all the trees, all, put out slightly deformed leaves —so that no one noticed, to say, 'But they were not always like this.'

In the Field,
2/5/15.

Dear Mother,

I hope you are quite well. First of all I must wish you many happy returns of your birthday although I am so late, but we have had a very rough time during the last fortnight, lost a lot of apparatus operators and had a great set back.

I have had some narror escapes lately but have managed to do some good work and was personally thanked by my Flight commander today. Well what I want you to do is to get me the papers to apply for a commission from the ranks.

There are quite a lot of commissions granted from the ranks at the present time and two of the chaps who I have been with all along have received commissions and gone back to England.

Of course I have no doubt they will all have to resign at the end of the war but they get a grant of a few hundred for doing so and a clothing allowance of £50 on appointment while the expences out here are practically nil and of course it is a different life altogether from being in the ranks. Two of the officers in this squadron were Corporals a few months ago.

I think the application form is Army Form B.201.

I cannot of course get a commission in the corps in which I am serving but if I obtain one I am allowed to transfer, so what I intend to apply for is one in the Infantry.

Of course I will have to come back to England for a couple

of months drill or so, but I have been out here a long time now and leave is all stopped so it would be a change for me.

I can get very good characters from the Captain and Major under which I am serving.

Will you have a try to get these papers for me, if you could get some help from anyone who has had anything to do with the army you would have no trouble. If you get them send them on in a thick envelope registered.

I did not make much of a show on board ship but I think I can make good in the army. Well I must finish now with the best of love to yourself and all at home,

from your loving son

JAKE.

P.S. Write by return.

Mrs. Russell's mind stepped over the words 'narror escapes.' She would have stepped in the same fashion over a crack opening suddenly at her feet—with the shock of blood near her heart, then forgetting it, pushing it aside. Don't think, don't think.

She had something urgent to do.

She wrote to Jake, promising him the application form, then she went out with his letter to see the Congregational minister. When she came into his room he felt, as always, instinctive respect, liking, a tremor of fear. It was perhaps her voice; reminding him, unwilling, of voices he shrank from as a child when visitors to the big house pointed above the fence at his mother's dahlias; their friendly masterful voices offended and cowed him: he found it easier to deal with God than with these voices. He remembered that Jake Russell mumbled when he spoke; that a thin toneless voice came foolishly from Hervey Russell's generous mouth. With this voice ringing in their ears from childhood! he said to himself.

Mrs. Russell looked at him and wondered whether he

was any use to her. He was a good man, she liked him, but did he know anything? I could see Mr. Simpson at the Bank.

She showed him Jake's letter.

'Oh, we can easily get him the form he wants,' Mr. Hanover said. 'Shall I get it for you?'

'Well, if you would,' Mrs. Russell said.

She was relieved. She had been afraid of writing to the wrong department, of getting no answer. It was almost a fear of being laughed at. Who had laughed at her? Her formidable mother? Probably—yet she laughed at her own children.

'It would be a good thing to get him home for a time,' Mr. Hanover said. 'Let's see, he's been out there more than nine months.'

'He has never had any leave at all,' Mrs. Russell said. 'Not since the beginning. I don't understand it.'

'They may be short of wireless operators.'

'They could surely let a boy like him come home. He won't be eighteen until August.'

It was a hot May day; the sunlight flowing into the small room from the street swept with it the cries of children, a fishwoman's piercing voice, the cracked notes of a piano playing a popular song. Mrs. Russell shivered.

'I hate that song,' she said.

Mr. Hanover moved to shut the window.

'No, don't close it, I'm just going.' She stood up, helping herself by one hand on his desk.

She used to be so quick, he thought. Kneeling on the path, her hands covered with earth from the roots she was pressing into it, delicate arrogant face. It was May then: the laburnum was just out.

'I'll bring the paper up to you as soon as it comes.'

'Thank you. It's kind of you to trouble.'

'No trouble. We must do what we can for our young men out there.' False, false, it was false. He reddened with shame, hearing himself say these things, but Mrs. Russell felt nothing wrong.

'Yes, indeed,' she said.

From his house she went to the shops. She spoke to people, her thoughts all the time turning over and over the image of Jake as an officer. Why not, she thought, why not? Other boys, who have done far less than he has. Far less. Clara's boy started, yes, as an officer.

Before the form came, a letter came from Hervey, from Liverpool. She was going to have a child. The letter was careful, apologetic. There were no tones in it, not more than in Hervey's reedy voice.

The thought of Hervey with a child moved Mrs. Russell to a quick tenderness. She must come here to have it, she thought. She was thankful Russell was at sea; he would have grumbled at the upset in the house. She wrote warmly and lovingly to the girl. Scarcely thinking what she was doing, she tried to comfort her for having the child. It was as if she saw without looking at it Hervey's stubborn fear.

This finishes her, Mrs. Russell thought. She'll be disappointed, but there. . . . Almost without knowing it she had kept alive in herself a secret hope that, in spite of her marriage, Hervey would do something. Something would come of all her hard work, her research scholarship, her cleverness. But this ended it. A child to look after put an end to any other hopes. The child took the place of her future.

She will be like me, Mrs. Russell thought. Her mind did not form the words; they passed over it as the shadow of a bird darkens the wave.

A week later Hervey came. Mrs. Russell looked at her and did not believe the child would be born alive in a month's time. Except for her drawn face and an awkwardness of her immature body there were no marks on her of pregnancy. But the child is dead, Mrs. Russell said to herself. She said nothing aloud. She was not anxious. Hervey was now a woman, she was twenty-one, she would get through with it, as one did.

Actually, she was at home less than a week before her child was born. Mrs. Russell thought she looked queer that afternoon; but Carlin had run out of the house and was lost, and in her anxiety about it she had no time to ask the girl if she felt ill. She sent her to look for Carlin across the fields. In the meantime Carlin came in, pleased with the excitement.

Hervey came back, looking white and exhausted. 'I have a pain,' she said awkwardly.

Mrs. Russell looked at her. 'Where is this pain?'

'It's here.'

The nurse had to be fetched; the doctor told. Hervey went up to her room at the top of the house, and in the middle of all this, with the nurse demanding things that were not in the house because no one had expected it to happen now, the postman came in at the gate holding, she saw it in his hand from the window, one of the green field service envelopes.

'Oh, find what you want,' she said to the nurse. 'Take the oilcloth off the kitchen table. There *is* no rubber sheet, I tell you; it's ordered, but it hasn't come.'

She went into her room with the letter and shut the door. Keep that woman out.

In the Field
18/6/15.

Dear Mother,

I hope you are quite well.

Just a few lines to let you know I have left the front for a time.

I am down in a seaside place called 'Le Crotoy' on the Somme.

I am down here on a course of flying training to be a pilot.

Today I had my second lesson and for about ten minutes I had full control of the machine, just think of it sailing along at 65 miles an hour in mid air and having the power to make the machine go up or down, right or left, it is a glorious feeling.

Although I have done so much work in aeroplanes I have never done any piloting to now.

This is a lovely little place very like Danesacre and what a change to get away from the front after 10 months of it.

I wonder if you noticed my name in the London Gazette of the 12th.

Last night for the first time since I left England I slept in a bed.

Well if I come back to England I can say I have done my bit both in the air and on the land, for I have done some of my best work with the artillery just behind the trenches.

Well I must finish now hoping to hear from you soon

Your loving son
JAKE.

What is this *London Gazette?* she thought, vexed: I must ask Mr. Hanover about it. She walked about her room. Her body was jerky from impatience. If Hervey had not been upstairs waiting for her child to be born, Mrs. Russell would have gone at once to the manse, not waiting for the morning.

She went upstairs several times during the evening.

Hervey was lying in bed, reading. She looked at her mother with an almost blank face. Already, the pain had altered her face, making it younger. The full lips, the steady unreflective look in the eyes, were those of her childhood.

'You must try to sleep,' she said when she went in for the last time, at ten o'clock.

'I'd rather read,' Hervey said.

'Well, the nurse may want to sleep.'

'She can.'

'Well, good night, my little dear. Remember I'm close to you, downstairs, if you want me.'

'I shall be all right,' Hervey said. 'Is this the shortest night?'

'No, I think that's tomorrow, or Monday.'

'Still, it's short,' Hervey murmured.

Mrs. Russell felt sorry for her, but she herself, although Carlin was not five years old, had forgotten what it feels like to bear a child. The pain, of course, is frightful, but how frightful it is one forgets. It is something a woman goes through. And since she had three times endured it herself, she felt, without knowing she felt it, an indifference to her daughter's coming agony that lay deeper than her love.

She began to think about Jake, what it could be in the *London Gazette*. And fell asleep. Once or twice during the night she heard overhead a soft heavy-footed tread, the nurse.

She went upstairs early, taking Hervey a cup of tea. The girl was now in great pain.

'This is going on too long,' she mumbled.

'It will soon be over,' Mrs. Russell said.

She touched the girl's forehead, wet. She felt Hervey

shudder and saw the pupils of her eyes roll up as the thin eyelids closed over them. *'Oh!'* Hervey said.

Mrs. Russell felt glad she need not watch this agony. She longed for it to be over, the sooner the better.

'That's my brave girl,' she said, going away. I don't like the nurse, she thought; I believe she's lazy. The prospect of having the woman in her house for a month exasperated her.

When she went downstairs the post had just come. There was nothing from Jake. Sometimes his letters came two days running, then none for a fortnight. There was a long envelope in Arnold's handwriting. She took it up wondering. He still wrote to her once a year, on her birthday, with a constancy which touched, if not her heart, her vanity —but why not both? we are not animals, to feel only one emotion at a time. He had sent gifts at the same time until she insisted on his giving this up, because it embarrassed her.

There was a letter and a folded paper. The *London Gazette*. Her body felt light and tense, as though the nerves were becoming steel hoops. Even without the penciled cross she would have found the name at once.

'Jacob Russell, Cpl. Distinguished Conduct Medal. For conspicuous coolness and gallantry on several occasions in connection with wireless work under fire.'

She drew a difficult breath. Conspicuous coolness and gallantry. My son, she thought. My son. Her body, if it had not been for the steel hoops, would have fallen. Ah. But I knew it, she thought, confused, I knew it always.

She took up Arnold's letter.

'My dear, your son is worthy of you. . . .' What nonsense, she thought. An exaggerated way of talking. She frowned, and her mouth drew into lines of contempt. But she was

not ungrateful to him; he had sent her the news. Which now broke freshly into her mind like the light through clouds. Oh, my son, my son, she thought again.

She put letter and paper carefully into the drawer with her gloves, and went to give Carlin her breakfast.

'Jake has won another medal,' she said to her.

'Has he?' Carlin said indifferently. After a moment she said, 'Who is Jake?'

Her mother did not answer. She was wishing Hervey were in a state to hear the news. I can tell her afterwards, she thought. Oh, why isn't this over? Eagerly, half hoping to find a change, she hurried upstairs. Except that Hervey looked very grey and tired there was no change. She was in agony. Mrs. Russell wanted to send Catherine for the doctor, but from vanity and self-importance the nurse refused.

Hervey's son was born about noon. A thin, long-backed baby, with remarkable eyes. Mrs. Russell was pleased with him, but she could not feel any deep emotion. This was not her son; it was Hervey's, and she was not a woman who loved children simply because they were children.

It was evening before she could tell Hervey about Jake. But then she had the intense satisfaction of hearing, from Hervey, just those words she most wanted to hear. Far, far more satisfying, touching the very nerve that was waiting for them, than anything in Arnold's letter; or any of Mr. Hanover's careful phrases. She felt very close to the girl.

When she slept, and dreamed, it was of Hervey as a newly-born child, lying, although she could not see her, near to her arm in the bed. In some other room; indistinct, almost in darkness. She seemed in her dream to be half asleep; and in this half-sleep she heard Hervey's voice outside the door of the room. 'Mother,' she said, 'mother,

don't be afraid, I'm here.' She tried to answer, to say, 'Why should I be afraid?' Her voice would not sound; she was speechless, unable to move. There was a pressure on her limbs as she lay in darkness; no longer hearing Hervey's voice.

She awoke, unhappy. A lamp and her watch were on the table at the side of her bed, and she turned the lamp on and looked: but she knew beforehand what time it was.

Chapter 25

Jake wrote to her again about his commission. He wanted recommendations, and she must see people and write formal letters, things she had got out of the habit of doing, and detested.

My O.C. will help me all he can, he says I must get good recommendations and he will send them in with his own. Well, who can we get? He said if possible get one at least from some Naval or Military Officer above the rank of Captain, or Captain, this is the most important one of the lot. Mr. Hanover would give one, a minister's recommendation is always a help, anybody of good standing, the more the better, do you know any old retired major etc. He said, 'I will help you all I can, I am very sorry to lose you.'

So will you do the best you can for me, I know there is no need to ask you as you know what it means to you and me in the future.

I do not mind what regiment I get in, anything, Yorks, Lanks, or anything.

A retired army officer or an officer on half pay would do.

Well I must finish now and will await your reply with interest knowing you will do your best for me.

With best love to yourself and all at home

from

your loving son

Jake.

She saw Mr. Hanover again, and told him what she wanted. From him she went down to the Bank. The bank

manager, looking at her across the table in his own room, found something pitiful and repellent in the sound of her voice. It was a quite different voice from the one she used in talk with him. Simply because she has come here to ask a favour, she is rude to me, he thought. How like her mother!

'Why, of course I can write you such a letter,' he said civilly. 'It's the simplest thing in the world. I'm delighted to do it.'

Mrs. Russell relaxed. 'That's kind of you.'

While he wrote, Mr. Simpson turned over in his mind a delicate problem. The obvious person to help her and her boy was Mary Hervey. Dare he speak of it?

He was one of the few people who knew the truth about her marriage and the long estrangement from her mother. He had never liked Mary Hervey after the day she had kept him standing for almost an hour when he had to see her about some property, and he sympathised with her daughter. But that was not to say he thought of her as a gentle oppressed person. Far from it. Every time he saw her he was reminded of Mary Hervey's overbearing manner.

Raising his head he said softly,

'You know, Mrs. Russell, your mother, I should say Mrs. Hervey, would be the best person you could get. I believe she bought half a million War Loan. But her name alone . . .'

He stopped. Mrs. Russell had turned very red. Her eyes started at him; he could almost see the anger flooding her brain. He wished ardently that he had not spoken.

'You'll realise that I don't need your advice on that matter, Mr. Simpson.'

'I was thinking of your boy,' he said hurriedly.

'I'm obliged to you. Your letter will no doubt be quite sufficient.'

She took it from him, and went out into the hot July sun, seeing nothing. Her heart was beating furiously, and her joints felt weak; she was forced to go into a shop and buy a pair of gloves she did not want, in order to sit down. The impudence of the man, she repeated; the impudence. If it had not been for Jake she would have torn his letter up rather than use it.

When she left the shop, neither the heat nor the sleek harbour, in which a mine-sweeper was furrowing its slow way to the quay, nor a sky dazzlingly filled with white clouds, made any mark on her mind, a glass reflecting nothing but her resentment. She had a long walk to her house. At the end she was calmer: calm enough to admit he had given her sensible advice.

But he knows nothing, she thought; nothing: he understands nothing. Even for Jake she could not humble herself to her knees. Least of all for Jake. To have to say, 'My son needs your help; I can't help him.' No, I can't do it, she thought. I can't possibly do it.

Out of all this she conceived the idea of writing to Arnold. To any other woman it would have occurred sooner, but a distaste for asking what she thought of as favours—really, arrogance in her was an instinct—kept ideas of this sort dark.

Her face as she was writing the letter had a curious expression—half disdain, as though what she was doing displeased her very much; half coquette. Her lips curved upward; her eyes, when she hesitated for a word, became bright and narrower. A girl who had never been allowed to speak for herself spoke for a moment through the fea-

tures, the pose, of the woman of forty-six, lined, heavy, older already than her years.

Arnold answered at once. It seemed he held the rank of Colonel in a Territorial battalion stationed on the east coast—Home Defence. He sent a eulogy of Jake, whom in fact he had never seen, and—his vanity shocked her—he sent, too, a photograph of himself in uniform. She looked at it gingerly, leaving it lying on the table, as it had fallen when she tore open the envelope. He was slim, upright; his face smiling; the look, in the eyes, the shapely nose, of an intelligent nicely mannered dog: she was almost able to see him frisk, beg.

She bit her lip. She laughed, a short jeering sound. Carlin frowned, playing at the other side of the room; she looked up.

'What are you laughing at?'

'Nothing, nothing.'

'Were you laughing at me?'

'Of course not. Don't be silly.'

She read Arnold's letter. At the end he had written, 'I have news that may interest you. I am selling the Star Line to Poulton, Dent and Co. I shall go on the board of the new firm, it is a tremendous affair, amalgamating ten shipping firms. The whole thing is very profitable, and leaves me freer to live as I've always wanted to.'

How does he want to live? she wondered, with contempt. What can he know? She read on. 'My dear, I want you to let me give you fifty shares in the new firm. A trifle. Don't quarrel with me about it, it's really nothing. *Sois charmante et tais-toi.* Take them for your boy if you won't accept them for yourself. Come, you've never been kind enough to me.'

She pressed her lips together. Taking up the photograph

she looked at it for a minute, without kindness, then tore it across and carried the pieces into the kitchen to the stove. She wrote, refusing the offer of shares—kindly as she thought; as it seemed to him, with an intolerant pride.

In the Field
August 16th 1915

Dear Mother

I hope you are quite well.

Thank-you very much for your two parcels, these will stock my larder for a long time, for they are very nicely chosen parcels, everything useful. We are just making some 'Cafe au lait' for supper and are going to try the cheese and biscuits.

Some days out here it is stifling all day, then when night comes, cold, strange, and a heavy dew falls.

Myself and another chap are living in a small tent we made of old fabric off the aeroplanes, is quite up to date. He fetched a stove back with him when he went on leave, my bed is of canvas slung on two sections of a wireless mast and my comrade's bed is of sacking between two old aeroplane skids.

Our larder is an old cubbord off an aeroplane, the framework of the hut split struts and skids.

The floor is earth kept dry by a trench dug round it.

The table is a sheet of ebonite.

One thing about active service you find out very soon there is nothing you can not do without.

I think when the war is over I will put all my worldly goods in a pack and go and bury myself in Brazil.

Well I will finish now as time is going about as quick as my candle.

He is disappointed, she thought, seeing, with a pang of grief, the hand moving slowly across the thin paper. It is taking longer to get his commission than he expected. Here, time crawled slowly between days lively with rumours, a ship sunk, a ship's boat coming in with men dy-

ing on the boards, many more women in hurried black, the passing over of German airships at night. There, it went quick as a candle.

Tomorrow when I wake up, it will be his birthday. Eighteen.

Chapter 26

After all, Jake got his commission in the Flying Corps. It was dated from October 30, and in November he came on leave. Mrs. Russell went up to London to meet him, and they bought his kit.

She took with her the Maltese scarf. He had always admired it.

They spent ten days of his leave in London, and twice Jake was greeted in the street by other officers; once by an elderly colonel who spoke to him with lively affection. 'Why, Russell, my dear boy, is it you? How delighted I am to see you! How are you, how are you going on?'

Mrs. Russell listened with the same sense—a pressure and a strange lightness in her body—she had when she read about him in the *London Gazette*. If this older man, this senior officer, thinks so highly of him he must be doing very good work, she thought. She listened, smiling, to the words, and she kept all these sayings in her heart.

One afternoon they were in Park Lane. She thought she had never seen the Park look so charming: the leafless transparent trees, with the light shining in them as through glass, the plumes of mist in place of beds of flowers. She touched Jake's arm.

'Isn't it lovely!' she said, in a voice gay with love, with joy.

'Yes,' he said. He was looking the other way, at the houses. Suddenly he doubled his hands. 'I'm going to live

in one of those houses one day,' he said. 'And you shall live with me, mother.'

She caught another glimpse of the crazy landscape, the bitter gulfs and peaks, of his ambition. Her heart failed, as always. With such thoughts, he could only be disappointed. Who, in heaven's name, had planted in him this hunger? It was not I, not I, she thought. Yet at that moment, she felt, obscurely, that she was guilty. Turn; turn away.

'I could do with a smaller house than that,' she said seriously.

'You shall have the best,' Jake said. 'Just wait a few years. You'll see. If they'll let me I shall stay in the Flying Corps after the War. I might be a colonel. You never know.' He smiled shyly.

The street-lamps, the glass blackened, were alight in Piccadilly, although it was daylight still; they hung there with a strange delicacy, like the Christmas toys, those glass bubbles children buy to hang on the tree. Why, I've never seen it look like this, Mrs. Russell thought. She felt at once younger, better-dressed, and when she glanced at Jake in his uniform of a second lieutenant her heart swelled again with happiness. Only a boy. If with no one helping him he had done so much already, he might do anything.

They were passing the Berkeley.

'Yes, in a few years I'll take you in there to dinner,' Jake said.

'I don't know that I want to go,' she answered, in a doubtful voice. Someone, she had forgotten who it had been, invited her there years ago. 'It must be an expensive place.'

'My hands are terribly rough,' Jake said, stammering. 'Is there anything I could do, to make them look better?'

They were red, scored everywhere with deep lines, the

wrists chapped. She had noticed them in the shop when he was buying gloves. He had not liked stretching them out; they made him ashamed.

'Yes, you could have them manicured,' she said.

'Where could I get it done?'

'I'll ask our maid in the hotel,' Mrs. Russell said.

'Don't tell her who it's for,' he said.

At the Circus he stood still, and looked all round. 'I shall never forget this,' he said quietly. 'Us here—like this —the streets. Me with my wings up. It's the best that could have happened. And you'll see, mother, it's only the beginning.'

Chapter 27

Now it was the second spring of the War.

She was startled by a letter from her mother. The envelope—writing she had not seen for twenty-eight years—shocked her, as if the writer had been dead. With an extreme distinctness, the first time for many years, she saw her mother looking at her across a table in her room; she saw every detail, her dress, the ironical smile on her face, the fine arched eyebrows; she heard through the open window the summer noise of the lawnmower, the tap-tap of the blind cord; she felt as she had felt then, defiance, anger, self-pity. Giddiness seized her. She dropped the letter, unopened still, and sat down, closing her eyes. In a moment she was calm. And it never occurred to her that the woman she had just seen was, in truth itself, no longer living. And that another had written the letter she now took up, an old woman, a woman she had never seen, never known, never heard speak.

Strange, strange. The letter, too, had been written to a dead woman. To a person who had been dead thirty years. To a girl. It was natural for the writer of the letter to begin it 'My little love', forgetting, she too, that it would not be read by the person for whom it was written.

Mrs. Russell read the letter, with one thought in her mind. We've managed without your help. We don't need you.

She began an answer. I shall tell her we need nothing

from her now. But when, without thinking, she had written the words 'Dear mother,' she felt a curious weakness. Nay, I'll not say it, she thought. Her face quivered. I'll wait.

It was in her mind that at the end of the War she would take Jake, who would have had other triumphs then, and go to her mother. Behold my son.

She put the letter away.

Outside the room she heard a curious sound: it was like some animal, a dog, snuffling, close to the door. She jumped up and opened the door. Catherine was standing in the hall with her hat on, just as she had come from her own house to begin her day's work—and late as usual—her face blubbered with tears. She had been crying for so long that she no longer made any sound except this snuffling; her lips were swollen, her eyes half shut, tears oozing under the spongy lids: she looked really dreadful.

'Catherine!' Mrs. Russell exclaimed. 'Whatever is the matter?'

'He's drownded, 'm,' Catherine said.

Mrs. Russell felt a pity in which there was a distinct trace of exasperation. She had intended to finish the spring-cleaning of the drawing-room today, the last room that remained to be done, but with Catherine in this state . . .

'Come. Sit down and tell me about it,' she said gently.

The telegram had been waiting for Catherine when she went home the evening before. It was a worse shock because his ship was not one of those sunk in the fight in the North Sea that week. He must have been transferred on the very eve of the battle. And why had they done it. 'Why s'd they?' Catherine stuttered. 'Why couldn't they leave him be? It's not usual, is it, 'm?'

'I'm sure I don't know, Catherine,' Mrs. Russell said.

'I'm very very sorry for you. I think you'd better go home now—and rest. You can come tomorrow, or as soon as you feel able to work.'

Catherine looked at her dully, squinting. 'I don't want to be at home,' she said. 'There's the drawing-room to finish.'

'Oh, we can finish it tomorrow,' Mrs. Russell said. Eager as she was to have the room done, she did not want Catherine about in this state. It was natural, but it was trying.

Catherine blundered out of the room, taking her hat off. 'You'll be doing it yourself if I'm not here,' she said stolidly. 'You needn't think I can't work because m' husband's drownded.'

'Well, if you'd rather,' Mrs. Russell said, half with relief, half vexed.

For an hour or so she left Catherine to work alone, then went upstairs to help her polish the furniture. As they worked together, Catherine talked disjointedly, in her hoarse slow voice: really, it was less talking than dragging up, one by one, stones embedded under the surface of her mind. 'There was a scarf I knitted . . . if he was wearing it it's gone, too . . . they don't let them do what they like, it's strict, a strict hard life . . . you know I'll have a pension, Mrs. Russell, but only if you don't marry, if you marry you lose it. There was a woman married and didn't tell them and they persecuted her for it when they found out. . . . His mother was waiting. They told her there was a telegram, and if it had come earlier in the day she would have fetched it here. She daresn't open it. She knew what it would be. . . .' She polished, knelt, shuffled across the floor on her knees, setting stone to stone, without design, with the memory only of trivial things. There had been no great moments in her life, needing, to express them, more

words than the few she had, as few and almost as hard as these stones.

Mrs. Russell listened. In a curious fashion she felt she knew her way about the other woman's thoughts, as she knew it about her own room in the dark, by her body's instinctive warning, without a need for touch.

Soon after this William Russell's ship, the new *Southern Star,* the successor to the first smaller ship, was sunk off the Irish coast by the German cruiser *Moewe.* The German was on her way home at the time, and the *Southern Star* was the last of her victims. Her commander took the crew on board to join the crews of other ships, and landed the whole lot of them at a German port.

Arnold wrote to her to tell her. The same week a letter reached her from Russell; it was written from a concentration camp in Brandenburg.

My darling Wife, well you will have heard the news we were ordered to stop and not having guns to defend ourselves we made the best of it. We came here by train from Hamburg, the journey not bad though slow, but you have to expect that in war time. It seems it was a mistake them bringing us here, a military camp, and merchant officers not counting as military though we take risks like the others, naval or army, but people are all for the newest thing, they'd be badly off if we didn't carry the food for them and no thanks no medals. Well my dear don't send any food or warm clothes here because we shall be moved to another camp this week, and in any case I don't need clothes here, I can wear anything the shabbier the better I'm sixty-seven, at that age you don't value a smart uniform, often the shabby ones know the most. Well my dear you must keep your heart up, I guess they will release us before long, they asked me today how old I was and I told them sixty-

seven, the German officer was a very decent chap, spoke English better than some of the English themselves. With best love and best wishes, from Your loving husband, Will.

WILLIAM RUSSELL, Captain.

He's safe enough, she thought. She wrote to the office to tell them she had heard. In their answer they enclosed a letter for Russell. It was addressed to him to the ship, to London. He would have had it the day he arrived. 'Mr. Arnold thinks we should forward to you any letters for Captain Russell, you can then use your own discretion about forwarding to Germany.'

She looked at the envelope with curiosity. It was written in a clumsy illiterate hand. After a moment's doubt she tore it open.

The writer was a woman—'Annie'—and the few lines of the letter left no doubt that Russell lived with her when he was in London. She seemed a common cheerful sort of woman, spoke of a music-hall they went to, 'enjoy ourselves old dear dont we', of missing him: it ended, 'Shall expect you Tuesday night. Fond love, Annie.'

Mrs. Russell felt a momentary sickness, the illusion of pain. She sat, pulling at her mouth, the letter under her hand. When she noticed it she brushed the letter on to the floor with a gesture of disgust. The sickening fellow, she said, thinking of Russell.

'If I had asked him to take me to a theatre he would have said he couldn't afford it,' she murmured.

For a minute this seemed the unforgivable part of it.

She felt very bitter and full of contempt. He was nothing to her; but he was part of her life: she could not turn him out as she would turn out a piece of furniture she no longer

admired. And the existence of this woman, and his intimacy with her, offended her deeply. It wounded a girl in her. She felt the last rags of liking, of respect, wither from the image of him in her mind.

She burned the letter. If any more come I shall burn them, she thought. Her instinct was not to speak about it to him. If she said nothing he with his monstrous capacity for deceiving himself would decide she didn't know. And the mere thought of speaking to him about 'Annie' disgusted her. No, no, she thought scornfully, let the lying wretch be; I'll not say anything to him.

There were no more letters from the woman. He may have written to her.

After this, Mrs. Russell felt no consideration for him: there was no need to consider him. She could let her coldness, her dislike, appear in her voice. She need make no pretence—she never made much—of tolerating him. She was done with him: it was *finish.*

In August, a day or two before his birthday—he would be nineteen—Jake was promoted to Flying Officer. He came home on leave. He had broadened, but he was thinner; there were nervous lines round his eyes: the youngest things about him were still his hands, which in spite of the sea had not lost their childish look, and his smile, reserved, sheepish, slow. It was hard to think of these hands on the controls of an aeroplane above the enemy lines, or on the release lever of a gun.

From things he said to her Mrs. Russell thought he was less confident. Had he been confident? She could form no idea of his life *out there.* He came home from a country

as strange, to any who has not been there, as death itself. She did not even ask him to tell her about it. His silence and her ignorance were an impassable gulf.

The evening before he went back he said casually that he had refused the job of instructor at Netheravon.

'Why did you do that?' she asked.

'I shouldn't have been any good at it,' he said. 'I s'd have made a fool of myself lecturing.'

'You would have had a rest.' You would have been safe, she meant.

He did not look at her. 'It's not a rest I want, mother, it's— You see if I stop in England I might miss promotion. If you don't do something they forget about you. I have to make them notice me.'

'What promotion do you expect?'

'I ought to be Flight Commander by now. They promised me.' He was staring at his hands. 'You never know what's going on, why some get ahead quickly and others are kept back.'

'You'll get promotion in time,' she said, not meaning what she was saying, wanting to comfort him.

He looked at her: his too full lips widened in his ashamed smile.

'Oh, I shall get it,' he mumbled, 'I'm bound to. Only when it's been promised, and then it doesn't come through, it makes you think—'

To her, his flying officer's uniform, his ribbons, seemed what should satisfy him. She forgot—she wanted to forget —the madness of his ambition.

He went away the next morning. The hired cab came, he got into it, and it went slowly down the hill past trees, the walls of gardens, old steps, the glimpse of the quay.

'Goodbye, goodbye.'

'Goodbye, Jake, goodbye, my love.'

Goodbye, goodbye.

His name was in the *London Gazette* again in December. This time the Military Cross.

'For conspicuous gallantry in action. He attacked a hostile kite balloon under very heavy fire. Later, his machine descended to within 150 feet of the ground, when he got the engine going again and recrossed our lines at 1,300 feet and returned safely. He has on many occasions done fine work.'

Many occasions? Few, few. What is there to say? One by one, a thousand by many a thousand, the young men were taken and slaughtered, like poor animals. The air took their last terror. Their broken bodies, their hands, were quickly pushed into the earth. They endured an unimaginable agony. For nothing.

For nothing. And there is nothing that forgives it.

Jake was killed. Early in January—January 5, 1917—he was shot down and his machine fell in No Man's Land. Some brave souls of the infantry went out there and fetched him in. He was breathing but soon died.

When the telegram came Mrs. Russell wanted to be alone. She could not bear that anyone should see her during the moments when her agony was still alive in her. It seemed to be living in her womb. A *something* tore and rent. When that died, she wept. There was no solace in her tears. They fell on a sterile earth. She saw herself in a future in which she was of no more account than a stock or stone—a woman without a son. There was nothing, nothing for her there.

She thought of his machine falling. An uprush of darkness through her body. She could not see the wounded boy in his last seconds of pain and defeat.

None saw him then.

Going, in her new black, about the streets, sometimes people she did not know stopped her to say they were sorry. Jake, because he was an airman, and because of his medals, had lived in the imaginations of Danesacre people, and when he died it was as though many young men died again. One afternoon it was a youth who stopped and spoke to her.

'See, I knew him, Mrs. Russell. I doubt he ever told you how we lowered him over th' east cliff, me and some other boys. We were walking, we had a bit of old rope, and someone said, Who dares be let down over th' cliff with this? Why, it was a daft thing to do, but we was none of us over ten or eleven. I dare, he says. When we'd pulled him back I had to be sick, because all but one strand of th' rope was rubbed clean through. He was nervous, too. I guess that was why he did it.'

There were bunches of early narcissus in the shops, but they were expensive. Catherine Elliot bought two and handed them to Mrs. Russell, with tears running down her face.

'For you for Master Jake.'

'Thank you, Catherine,' Mrs. Russell said. 'But you shouldn't spend your money on flowers.'

Catherine hurried back to the kitchen because she was crying. 'It's nothing,' she muttered, 'nothing, I just wanted to get a few flowers. I think there ought to be flowers for them.'

The letters from his commanding officer to Mrs. Russell told her that the week before he was killed Jake had been transferred to another squadron, No. 6 Squadron, 'pending his promotion to Flight Commander.'

So he knew, she thought. He had that pleasure for a few days.

It vexed her that everyone could not know.

A captain's wife stopped her in the street. 'You weren't at church yesterday, Mrs. Russell. Mr. Hanover spoke about Lieutenant Russell after the service.'

'Oh, yes?' Mrs. Russell said.

'I'm sure I was downright grieved when I heard about it.'

'He had been made Captain Russell before he was killed,' Mrs. Russell said.

'Had he indeed!' the other woman exclaimed. 'And his father, Captain Russell, a prisoner? Have you good news about him, Mrs. Russell?'

'About whom?'

'Why, about Captain Russell.'

'Oh, he's quite well,' Mrs. Russell said in a dry curt voice.

She had heard that morning from the office that Russell was ill in the sanatorium in Ruhleben. Her first thought, when she read the letter, was, It would be better if he didn't come back.

She was very bitter against him. Not because of the woman in London—that hardly touched her—but because of Jake. Because he, an old unwanted man, was alive and the boy dead. And because he had treated Jake meanly. I shall never know what he did to him that voyage, she thought.

And when Jake wrote to him to tell him about the Médaille Militaire, he wrote back, 'Don't imagine you've done anything out of the ordinary. A good few men have done far finer things without getting a medal for it.'

He meant himself, she thought, despising him. She could forgive him anything except the way he had treated Jake.

Jake's death was an end for her, a hard and bitter end. She was not old—forty-eight—but she thought of herself now as old; her life tired her. Insensibly, she began turning away from life as from a person who had disappointed her. She had no longer any patience with it.

She was not, you see, able to compromise. Another woman might have made the best of a poor bargain. That was never her way. She was not, she was not ever, like that. She could not be thankful for less than she had expected. Never would she forgive life for what it had done to her, never say with fools and saints, It was for the best.

Chapter 28

Towards the end of the War, that last summer, Russell was exchanged into Switzerland, and came home. His wife greeted him coldly enough. She might have been a little sorry about it if he had died in the German camp. Nothing stirred in her, when she saw him getting out of the cab, except a weary distaste. He kissed her. She drew back. 'Well—how are you?' she said quietly.

He gave his short laugh. 'Oh, I'm quite well,' he said.

'Did you have a good journey?'

'Yes. Yes, it wasn't bad.'

He was standing, rather at a loss, in the hall. He hardly knew what to do.

'Tea is set for you in the breakfast-room,' Mrs. Russell said. 'You'd better have it now. Catherine will carry your bag up to your room.'

She went back into the sitting-room and closed the door. Russell said, 'Ha, Catherine, is that you?' His head sank on his breast and he went into the other room, awkwardly. He walked straight across the room to the French window and stood looking out. Then he turned and looked at the sofa and the chairs as though the room were so strange to him he couldn't imagine himself sitting there. Catherine brought in the teapot. He did not thank her, but sat down to the table and began to eat, slowly, wolfishly, his head bent.

After tea, he went into the sitting-room, and stood in the

middle of the room looking about him with an assumption of ease. Mrs. Russell was resting on the couch, with a book. She put it down and glanced at him, waiting for him to say anything he had to say, as though he were an unwanted visitor.

'Ha,' he said at last, 'I see you've got a new writing-table.'

'Yes. I put the other in your room,' Mrs. Russell said.

'And a new mirror, eh?'

'The room badly wants a new carpet,' Mrs. Russell said. 'I shall go over to Scarborough tomorrow and buy one.'

Russell said nothing. He lumbered across the room and gazed intently at a painting for a minute, then turned and went out. Mrs. Russell took up her book, but she could not read. She felt as though drops of blood were being forced through a narrow channel in her head. My son, my son, she thought. Oh, my son!

It was no use. Nothing could put that right.

Hervey was staying in the house with her child. She had listened to this conversation with pity for both of them. When she heard her father come downstairs from his room and go into the breakfast-room, she went in there. Someone must speak to him, she thought. The trouble was, she had nothing to say. None of William Russell's children had any liking for him, or felt that they knew him better than a stranger. Only Hervey had moments of sympathy for him, born of her insight into his tortuous, lonely, baffled mind. Disagreeable as he was, she understood him better than the others. And she was never able to condemn him. But she rarely condemned anyone.

'Were they decent to you?' she asked.

'Who?' Russell asked curtly.

'The Germans.'

'Oh, they were all right.' He made a sudden gesture. 'They knew what they had to deal with in us English. We didn't stand any nonsense.'

'I suppose there were all sorts in the camp.'

'Ha, yes. Some queer ones. I didn't speak to many. Two or three was quite enough. The Brandenburg camp was worse than the other, they burned some of the prisoners.'

'What do you mean?'

'A hut caught fire and the men in it were burned to death,' he said indifferently. 'Queer people, them Germans.'

Hervey did not know whether this was a true story or something he had imagined. He said nothing more. He was filling his pipe, as intent as though he were alone in the room.

'Did you see the *Southern Star* sunk?' she asked.

Russell looked up quickly. His face became animated, younger.

'Yes. She went down very gracefully.' He laughed, a short nervous laugh. 'She didn't dive. She went down—down.'

He held his hand out, palm downwards, and brought it slowly down.

'What did they do?' Hervey said; she was curious. 'Did they torpedo her?'

'Yes. Two torpedoes.'

It sounded like a murder.

Mrs. Russell went to her room early. She heard her husband come upstairs, and his heavy tread on the landing, softly, to her door. As he was passing, going to the upper floor, he hesitated and said, 'Good night.' She did not

answer: it seemed that some hand flung all her life to one side, as water is flung to the side of a bowl: she could not speak. Russell spoke again.

'Good night.'

The voice she then found was lifeless, and she drawled her two words like throwing a bone to a dog. 'Oh. Good night.'

If a stair had not creaked she would not have heard him go up to his room.

Shortly after the Armistice Clara came on one of her visits. It was the first for a long time. She dreaded having to speak of Jake: she was so nervous that as always she was clumsy; she spoke of the Armistice.

Mrs. Russell sent her a forbidding glance.

'My good girl, I had little enough to rejoice for when it came.'

'At least the War's ended, thank God,' Clara said, shaken. 'I know it's all been wicked and dreadful and nothing will be the same, and oh dear, Nicholas hasn't written to me for more than a month—'

She stopped, and blushed. The very last thing she had meant to speak about was her own son.

'Yes, it's ended for you,' Mrs. Russell said in a low voice. 'Not ended for me. Nor ever will be.' Her voice became so bitter it was unbearable: Clara drew back in fear. 'You and your Nicholas! What is that to me? No armistice, no ringing of bells, will bring Jake to life.'

'He was very brave,' Clara murmured.

'He was brave and he worked hard. Hard. Everything he had he got for himself. Not a soul helped him. *He* wasn't sent to Eton, Oxford, holidays abroad, riding—and

the rest of it. He did everything for himself by his own courage—and after a poor nineteen years of it he's dead. He had very little. Those two years at sea while your boy was at an expensive school—and what a life for a young nervous boy! Nay, I'll never forgive it. Never.'

Clara looked at her with pity and growing fear. She feared the harm Sylvia must be doing herself by this uncontrolled hatred and anger. How old is she? she thought. Fifty, she's fifty. Why can't she forgive now?

'You'll only be angry with me, Sylvie,' she said hurriedly, 'but I must say it—if you'd only come to mother she would have done as much for Jake as she did for my Nicholas. You didn't give her the chance.'

'Rot! Rot, I tell you!' Sylvia Russell's voice had risen to a harsh scream. 'There was nothing to stop her asking how she could help. Nothing. You have no right to blame me for it, no right at all.'

She stood up, her face contorted and red, and walked over to the window. It was growing dark. She let down the Venetian blinds, then, as if seized with madness, jerked one of them up and dropped it again half a dozen times. The noise was terrifying. With her hands to her ears Clara ran out of the room. As she hurried upstairs, breathless, feeling quite ill, she thought, So she still thinks about mother—after all these years she's thinking more about it than anything—it's dreadful, dreadful. What can I do?

On the stairs she passed Carlin. The little girl was listening, with an expression of ironical interest, to the strange sounds from the drawing-room.

Chapter 29

Next year the War Office, 'A.G.10,' sent Jake's 1914 Star, and the year after two more medals:

> . . . I am directed to transmit to you the accompanying 'British War and Victory Medals' which would have been conferred upon Captain J. Russell, had he lived, in memory of his services during the Great War.
>
> In forwarding the Decorations, I am commanded by the King to assure you of His Majesty's high appreciation of the services rendered. . . .

For a perpetual memorial of his hands and clouded eyes.

The letter a printed document, with space left for the name and the names of the medals to be written in a fine hand imitating print. What a smell, of corruption from all their hands pressed under the earth, came from the fine white paper!

Both these documents were addressed to Russell, as the boy's father, but Mrs. Russell took them and kept them. She kept the medals, too, as she had kept Jake's kit and put them away in a locked drawer in her room. Russell dared not say a word. If he had tried to protest she would have told him sharply he had no right to handle any of the boy's things. It would have killed her to see him touch them.

This year Catherine left her again. She had remarried, which Mrs. Russell thought ridiculous at her age (Catherine was forty-two). She advised her strongly against it.

'You'll lose your pension,' she said.

'Yes'm, I know,' Catherine said mildly.

'If you want my opinion, you're doing a very foolish thing. Here you are, with a safe income, throwing it away, simply to get married. Absurd!'

If Catherine resented this criticism she did not show it. Her heavy face, the eyes like dark stones embedded in the leaden flesh, had the air of listening without hearing.

As it turned out, she had made a poor marriage. Her new husband was lazy and selfish. He encouraged Catherine to go on working. But now that she had him to look after she began to be late in the mornings. The time when she could be expected to arrive crept from nine to ten. Mrs. Russell spoke sharply to her. She did better for a day or two, then it was ten o'clock again when she hurried clumsily down the path to the back door and set breathlessly, with a blind fumbling of her limbs, to work.

Mrs. Russell lost patience.

'You're getting beyond all,' she said. 'The truth is you have no time to do the work of two houses.'

'I have to keep my own house clean,' muttered Catherine.

'Quite. But I pay you to clean mine. If you can't do it, you'd better give up trying.'

'Very well, 'm,' Catherine said.

Not, after all, anxious to lose her, Mrs. Russell said, 'Try to get here at half-past nine in future.'

This was a concession. She was the more shocked when the other woman, coming in for her money at the end of the day, said, 'So I'm not to come tomorrow?'

'I never said so,' Mrs. Russell said, staring. 'But you can please yourself.'

There was a pause. Catherine said, 'Good day, 'm,' and

removed herself—with her gait it was rather like pushing a sack of potatoes—from the room. In the morning she didn't come.

At Christmas Mrs. Russell went to see old Mrs. Fisher—Jake's Mammy Fisher. She found there a very old woman—eighty-two she was this day—held to her chair by her own too heavy flesh. She did not seem in any way pleased when Mrs. Russell came into her room. Perhaps she had expected a younger woman. More likely she had forgotten she was coming. Or why.

Mrs. Russell looked round the narrow room, the low ceiling, the warmth, the smells of earth, clothing, old wood, sweated from the walls.

'I can almost see him now,' she said, 'straddling his fat, red, short legs on that rug—his red face—frowning.'

'See who?' Mrs. Fisher said.

'Why, Jake.'

'Oh, yes, Jake.'

But it was plain she had forgotten him—or almost forgotten him. If she recalled him at all it was in some region of her thoughts where a young woman and her son were—lively in their time—shadows seen from this end of the long room of time, without names or substance: if you wait time enough, the memory lets run out all but some bright trifles left lying about until the last.

Mrs. Russell would not allow to herself she was disappointed.

She walked slowly home, the long way past Hervey's old school, the harbour, the old houses, the raised pavement below the hedge, the field, the convent. Lights were coming on in the windows of the houses. Tomorrow I must go and see the Christmas shops, she thought.

Even without this, her feet would have taken her there. What would—what one thing ever could—keep her from going at Christmas to see the shops?

She opened the door of her house. The day before this Hervey had come, her five-year-old boy with her. The child, Richard, was not yet used to the house. When the door opened on him with this suddenness—he was standing just beyond it—he gave a start of fear and rushed to his mother. She bent over him, comforting, with quick words.

Mrs. Russell looked at the pair for a minute. A feeling of anger seized her. It shook her heart, and shook words out of her.

'Look at two of them,' she cried, 'the mother's pet!'

She walked past Hervey and went upstairs to her room. Carlin had run in front of her and was waiting. She took no notice of her mother's frowning face, but said, in a loud voice,

'How long has he come for?'

'How long has who come for, my darling?'

'Richard, of course.'

'Not for long.'

'Well, he can't have all my things to play with,' Carlin said. She laughed. Her eyes sparkled; she began to walk about the room, smiling, lifting her thin arms. At ten she was already very tall. She had the delicate skin, the thin supple limbs, of a very young, very carefully-nurtured child. She had a passionate temper. Mrs. Russell had long since given up trying to rule her. She felt for this youngest a love that blinded her to faults. It was fortunate the child had virtues as well: she was generous, straightforward, energetic. Her mother gave her everything and exacted nothing, not even obedience. Why?

It was not only that she was tired. She had also the unuttered sense that she must give and give, asking nothing, so that this, yes, this child, should not accuse her. But who had accused her?

Chapter 30

After three years, Catherine—she was now Catherine Holler—came back. She had had a child, a boy, and this, at her age—or only her life—had given her body the curious shape of one of those trees which after a struggle to live have grown leaning sideways to the ground. She was stout, too. As she walked her body seemed to project backwards in a clumsy arc. She dressed herself anyhow, keeping all her money for her child, and her garments strained to keep together across this misplaced hump.

Mrs. Russell scolded her for spending so much on the boy.

'You should keep something for yourself, Catherine.'

'Oh, it doesn't matter what I wear,' Catherine said, unsmiling. 'Holler says he has to walk round me like walking round th' old Abbey—ruins an' all, he says.'

'Then Holler ought to be ashamed of himself,' Mrs. Russell said drily.

She was far from guessing that in her own eyes Catherine was doing for her child only what Mrs. Russell did for hers. Possessed by a dumb jealousy, she lavished shillings to match pounds lavished on Carlin.

The ten years between servant and mistress were unnoticeable now. Catherine Holler seemed at least as old as Mrs. Russell, and slower. You could not say they were friends; they were even closer than that; since Catherine's knowledge of Mrs. Russell was almost the knuckle's knowl-

edge of the hand. And Mrs. Russell had so used herself to the other woman that she was less vexed than astonished when she found out something unpleasant about her.

She began to miss things from the house. One day it would be kitchen knives: there had been six and now only two lay in the drawer. Or she took it into her head to count the pillowcases, and found fewer than she had thought she possessed.

It was some time before she connected Catherine with these accidents. Then something—an expression on the other woman's face, a curious involuntary gesture—when it was a question of a silver spoon missing pierced her mind with light. You! she thought.

She spoke to Hervey, who with her boy was living now in rooms in the country near Danesacre (her marriage already half a failure). 'Well,' Hervey said, shrugging, 'I suppose she thinks we have so much more than she has she can help herself to a few things.'

'It's stealing, whatever she thinks,' Mrs. Russell retorted.

When Catherine first came to her, when she was a young woman, Mrs. Russell would have chased her out the first time she stole. Now? She might make excuses for herself (though none for Catherine); say, They all steal. They, the race of servants. The truth was she no longer had the hardness to rid herself of Catherine.

The thief must stay. And nothing must be said. Once openly accused, she would have to go. Mrs. Russell found an adroit way out. When something disappeared, a spoon, a cup and saucer, she would go into the kitchen and say in an energetic voice,

'Catherine, one of the silver teaspoons is lost. It must be

somewhere. Look everywhere for it, will you? It must be found.'

The next day, or in a day or two, found it was.

It was tiresome, and tiresome to have to lock up tea, and count linen, and hide the keys of cupboards under vases. But better than an upheaval. Mrs. Russell no longer welcomed upheavals.

In April Hervey got the money for a novel, the third she had written. The second had had a moderate success. Mrs. Russell felt pleased that she was on the way to doing something with her life, but she did not say much. She was past the time when these small triumphs would have filled her with an immense confidence, and joy. She would only rejoice carefully.

'I'm going to buy you a fur coat for your birthday,' Hervey said.

'You can't afford it,' Mrs. Russell said. Her face had changed quickly.

'Oh, yes, I can,' Hervey persisted. She had two hundred and fifty pounds.

'You need all your money.'

'I have enough for this.'

'Are you quite sure?' Mrs. Russell said, in a slow voice. She was seeing herself after church. That's a beautiful coat, Mrs. Russell. Yes, it's a birthday present from my daughter. Well, now, that's the sort of daughter to have! Oh, her writing does very well, you know.

They went over to Scarborough to get the coat. It was the same man in the fur department; he had the scar of a bayonet-cut on his right cheek, and his red hair was

thinner and turning. He knew Mrs. Russell well now; she had bought a fur tie from him, and a muff. When she told him she had come to buy a coat he smiled with extreme sweetness, and fetched out coat after coat, not bothering her with talk except to tell her which fur was really good. When she had almost chosen, he said, 'You'll never be sorry if you take that coat, Mrs. Russell—it will last you for years.'

'Do you like it?' Mrs. Russell asked Hervey. 'It's a lot of money.'

'No, no,' Hervey said eagerly. 'Is it what you want?' It was sixty guineas.

'It's beautiful,' Mrs. Russell said. Absorbed, she ran her hand over and over the sleeve. Hervey felt the same poignant happiness as when she gave her son something he had wanted very much and she could not afford.

One June morning Mrs. Russell was standing in the doorway, dressed to go to the shops. She was feeling well, and happy enough. The tree in the road, which was always so late, had come suddenly into leaf; she stared at it, at the glistening delicate green leaves, like scraps of strong silk, and looked beyond it at the sky where a few fleecy clouds played like dolphins in the sleek blue. Once, on a day like this, I should have been away to the country, she thought. But the thought was not a mournful one. A jet of pure happiness sprang from her memory of those days, when she was young, when her children were with her, and when Danesacre was even smaller than now, and more lively and charming, and people walked more, went on picnics on foot, ate breakfast at daybreak to enjoy a longer day, worked harder, and knew a dozen ways of cooking a hare.

She saw a telegraph boy wheeling his bicycle up the hill. It was not likely he was coming to their house, but she waited. When he stopped at her gate and leaning his machine against the wall fumbled in his case, she felt a sudden panic. What now? Her heart seemed to drop.

She took the telegram from the boy. *'Please come Mother dying come at once. Clara.'*

She waved the boy away, not able to speak. Her body, as she went back into the house, seemed heavy; the joints of her arms and knees were without strength. She stumbled and sat down on the hall seat.

'Catherine, Catherine, I want you.'

Catherine shuffled quickly out of the kitchen. 'Are you ill, 'm?'

'Go round to Smithson's and tell them to send a taxi,' she said. 'At once, I want it at once.'

When Catherine had gone she smoothed the telegram and read it again. How like Clara to repeat herself even in a telegram! This thought steadied her. Her heart had suddenly become calm: when she stood up she no longer felt weakness in her limbs. I hope it's Craig driving the taxi, she thought. Of the three drivers Smithson kept for his cabs, Craig, the ex-soldier, was the one she felt safest with. He was a youngish man, quiet, friendly, and gave to 'good customers' the feeling of security he used to give to the officer whose batman he was.

For three years now Mary Hervey had been living in a house she built on the moors above Danesacre. It was eight miles by the road. The taxi came, and she told Craig where he was to take her, adding without thought,

'You must go as quickly as you can, Mrs. Hervey is very ill.'

'Yes, Mrs. Russell, I will,' Craig said, in a firm comfort-

ing voice. No one could have told that he knew he was seeing the end of an old story, older than himself, only kept alive by the delight in scandal of a small town.

Mrs. Russell looked out at the fields, then at the moors. She had walked so often up this road—it crossed the moors going north—in her young days, when Jake and Hervey were children, they walked as far as the place where her mother had put her house. For years she had not been so far. Under the extreme confusion of her mind, extraordinary and painful, she felt a lively curiosity about this house. She did not think about it directly, but her thoughts glanced at it and flew aside, like the peewits that came close to the road and flew off with a cry as the car passed them. It must be a splendid house, she thought momentarily; a splendid place for a house, on this edge of the moors.

Of her mother she could not think for more than a few seconds at a time. She tried; but the images in her mind were of a woman younger by ten years than she was herself, now. That that woman could be dying was absurd. And so—though she repeated again and again the silly words, Let her not die before I come—they meant nothing, nothing at all. *Who* was dying?

It was of herself she thought, of Jake, of Hervey. She passed the mound with the rowan trees where they ate a picnic lunch, the path to the quarry, the spring of ice-cold water. There Jake spluttered it from his mouth.

It seemed to her that threads as fine as a spider's web broke in her mind and the ends floated out of sight. She snatched—her hand closed on nothing. My life, my life, is over, she thought, grieved. Yet, all the time, she was aware of her body, of the life in it, of the lovely rounded

hills on the farther side of the valley, of the yellow flowers in the ditch between the road and the moor, and, high over them, the burning colourless sky, now bare of clouds. Let her not die before I come. A three-cornered tear in Jake's coat, the clumsy fellow.

The car turned off suddenly on to the new narrow road; she leaned out, eager for her first sight of the house.

Clara must have been watching for her, she came into the hall directly behind the man-servant, her face tired and blotchy.

'Oh, Sylvie, she's almost gone.'

She climbed the stairs, holding to the rail, her limbs heavy, failing her. What's the matter with me? she thought, afraid.

The room was large, with many windows, and the bed between windows. A nurse. Another woman. A young man. Mrs. Russell leaned over the bed and looked down at an old woman. Mother, she thought. But the word meant nothing. She had never seen this old woman before. The grief that seized her, the shudder of her body, had nothing to do with her. Her natural body shuddered, grieved, beside the body it remembered dimly. She herself could only wait, in a suspension of all feeling, her mind ruined.

She was bewildered. Words were forced from her. She spoke in a harsh voice, too loud for a death-bed, as she knew.

'She doesn't know me.'

But she meant, I don't know her. She turned away, still waiting. And after a few minutes, when there was no sound in the room except the nurse's starched skirts and Clara crying hysterically, 'No, no, don't, don't,' she went

out of the room. A few slow, heavy tears came from her eyes. It seemed to her that there should have been another death, not this one.

She would not stay in the house, although Clara begged her to stay and not leave her alone. 'You have your son, Nicholas,' Mrs. Russell said. She spoke gently enough; she liked the young man, Clara's son: she saw him now for the first time since he was a year old. But she would go home. She was not at ease in this house; it was too formal, with so many servants. She had forgotten how to live in such a house.

Nor did she go to the funeral. Her dislike of taking trouble, of seeing people, had become a habit. She would rather walk five miles than go out to tea. She knew there would be scores of people, other shipbuilders or their representatives, wealthy people from London, at the funeral, and rather than meet them and have to talk to them she refused to go.

She excused herself by thinking, It would be hypocrisy.

She had thought bitterly of her mother all these years, and the woman of whom she had been thinking had died and her place had been taken by a stranger, old, with the face of a skull, very small, lying in a strange bed. If she allowed herself to pay too much attention to this old woman, to think much about her, she might begin to feel she had done wrong in hating her. She had to defend herself now against an old woman, a stranger.

And was it hate she had felt? She would die without knowing. She refused to look at the broken images in her mind. No, forget it, forget, she thought.

She heard from the solicitor first, and then from Clara, that she was to have an income of five hundred pounds for her life. When Hervey came that afternoon she told her;

she looked up as Hervey came into the room and spoke instantly.

'Your grandmother has left me five hundred pounds a year.'

Hervey tried to guess whether she was pleased. 'Oh, well, that's worth having,' she said gaily.

'It's little enough,' Mrs. Russell said. 'When you think how many millions she had. It's only for my life. She's left nothing to Carlin—or you.'

'She didn't know us,' Hervey said in a low voice.

Mrs. Russell had a sudden feeling of guilt. It vexed her, and she said angrily,

'Why should she know you—or you her?'

She was silent. Her mind fastened on another thing that was vexing her. 'I've had a letter from your father to say he's retiring. He's already written to the office and told them he wants to retire after this voyage. They've promised him a pension. I don't know how much of a pension. They're not bound to pay any at all.' Her face twitched with contempt. 'The fool,' she exclaimed. 'Why didn't he write to me before he did anything? But, no, he must rush in and arrange it—as foolishly as possible. And why retire at his age? He'll only be bored hanging about the house every day for the rest of his life. Sickening.'

'How old is he?' Hervey asked carelessly.

'He's seventy-four. He's nineteen years older than I am . . . there are plenty of Danesacre captains older than he is—not dreaming of retiring. He won't like it. On the ship he is waited on hand and foot. Yes, hand and foot. He is a *fool.*'

Never once has he taken my advice.

'Before the War I advised him to buy shipping shares when they were going begging. During the War they paid

I don't know what. He'd have been a rich man. As it is, those shares he bought—because some man told him—are completely valueless. Not worth a ha'penny stamp. That's the kind of fool he is.'

'Well, thank goodness you have some money of your own at last,' Hervey murmured.

An unreasonable anger seized Mrs. Russell. She felt it move in her head with a sudden warning tension.

'It's come too late,' she said. 'If I'd had it in time to help Jake—or when I could enjoy it.'

Hervey shrank from her own harsh pity. She could not bear the knowledge that her mother was cruelly disappointed by her life. Why, why didn't you have the things you wanted? she cried. Why was there so little for you? At this moment she would have cut her hand off to give her mother another life.

'You can still enjoy it,' she muttered.

Mrs. Russell did not answer. She, only she, knew that time takes without putting anything back. By an immense effort, she could recall the rooms in the first house of her married life, the fireplace, the blue rug, beyond the window the water of the harbour lying in its muddy channels like smoke: of the young woman to whom these things had been not less real than the life animating her body with energy, with delight, not a trace.

Chapter 31

Easter, birthdays, Christmas, New Year—the year was dotted with white stones marking anniversary days. Each had its ceremony. Mrs. Russell brought up her children to think these days very important. When they were young she crammed their stockings at Christmas, even if she had only a little money, and prepared for their birthdays a tray of gifts; and at the proper seasons during the year they got the proper things, shuttlecock and battledore in the first sunny days, dyed eggs on Easter Monday: and when she came home from a voyage she brought presents.

As they grew up they fell naturally into this habit of remembering days, even Carlin, whose instinct was to mock the past. They now prepared for her the tray piled with gifts—on her birthday, at Christmas, Easter, New Year. Even the anniversary of her wedding day was remembered by her children with bunches of flowers.

A tray Russell had brought from Japan was used at these times, and never at any other. It was a square tray of black lacquer, with deep rims.

Christmas Eve, 1930, Hervey was living in Danesacre: she came in with her presents for the tray and gave them to Carlin, who would carry the tray in to her mother on Christmas morning.

Carlin had come home from the university—this was her third year, she was twenty—in a bored restless mood. Mrs. Russell spoke about it to Hervey. First, in a mysterious

voice, she asked her to make sure Carlin was in her own room.

'She won't stay at the university, and she doesn't want to live at home—she wants to go to London, and train there to be a secretary.'

Mrs. Russell was anxious and a little disappointed.

'Why not let her go?' Hervey said.

'I think she's too young.'

'Not younger than I was when I went,' Hervey said.

'Well, yes, but she's not strong,' Mrs. Russell said swiftly.

Even to herself she would not admit that she was far more careful of Carlin than she had been of her other children. She made excuses for spending all her money on her. One year of her school in Geneva had cost more than the whole of Hervey's education. She had only to ask for things and she got them. Hervey knew this, but did not mind. She felt—when she encouraged her mother to spend her money on Carlin—that she was indulging her in a quite harmless vice. If it made her happy to give Carlin everything it was very fine that she could do it. Hervey listened willingly to her mother's stories about Carlin, her cleverness and the rest of it. It was never to Hervey that Mrs. Russell made excuses for spending hundreds of pounds on her youngest child. Without thinking about it, she took it for granted that Hervey approved. Sometimes Hervey had to use tact to discover what it was Mrs. Russell wanted to give Carlin; then she would suggest it, and watch her mother's face soften with pleasure in having it made easy for her.

'There are good secretarial colleges,' she said carelessly.

'Yes, I know,' Mrs. Russell said.

You mean Carlin has told you, Hervey thought. She

knew that what Carlin had made up her mind to ask for she would get. All Hervey could do was to see to it that her mother enjoyed giving it to her. So now she said meditatively,

'I'm sure there are very comfortable rooms to be got—or she could live with a family. And when she's trained, I'll find her a post. She could be secretary to a publisher, or an editor. I'm sure I can find her something she'd like.'

'Oh, she'll do well,' Mrs. Russell exclaimed. 'Of course she'll do well. She's very clever, you know.'

'Yes, she is,' Hervey said.

Mrs. Russell felt happier. 'It seems a pity she won't stay to take a degree,' she said, looking at Hervey.

'That doesn't matter. She can say she spent two years at Oxford. The money isn't wasted.'

'Oh, no, of course it's not wasted.' Her face changed quickly. 'I haven't been to see the Christmas shops. I was going this afternoon with Carlin, but she didn't want to go.'

'We can go now,' Hervey said. 'They won't close yet.'

'Have you time?'

'Plenty of time.'

Holding her arms for her fur coat, Mrs. Russell said, 'How long have.I had this coat?'

'Seven years. Almost time I bought you another.'

'It will last my time,' Mrs. Russell said, but she smiled.

It was a cold evening, with a wind from the northwest blowing the winter dust about the streets, and pruning the trees. The water clattered against the piles of the bridge in the darkness of the night and the harbour. Mrs. Russell leaned her weight on Hervey as they crossed.

'Really, the shops on this side are nothing now,' she

murmured. 'When I was a girl they used to spend days decorating. I remember going with Clarry to Godburn's to buy a Christmas present for my mother, and while we were choosing it she came in, and we hid behind a pile of boxes, and of course Clarry, great donkey, must stumble against it and knock the whole thing over, boxes flying everywhere. Her mother was furious with her. She said, "*Girl,* have you nothing better to do than to play the fool in a respectable shop?" Clarry was so frightened she said, "Yes, mother." "Then go and do it," she said, and we flew out, leaving the present we had chosen for her lying on the counter. We went back for it afterwards and old Mr. Godburn said, "A fine woman, your mother, a very fine woman." We used to call her Mrs. Bultitude—only to ourselves.'

They stood in front of Godburn's window. There was nothing in the shop Mrs. Russell would have had as a gift. Nevertheless she stared into the depths of the window as if it were a mirror. What did she expect? A girl of sixteen flying out to greet the woman, sixty-two, heavy, who leaned there?

She turned away. 'We might as well go back,' she said in a lingering voice, 'there's nothing.'

Going up the steep street from the bridge she had to stop and rest.

'You ought not to have come,' Hervey said. She felt angry with her for taking no care of herself. Her heart was weakened, but she still went up and down the steep streets to the shops, every day, because her life was there. It was in every stone, every window, left by her in her daily going.

'Nonsense. If I can't come out I might as well be dead,' her mother said sharply.

They toiled up the hill. Mrs. Russell stopped at another shop and said,

'Your grandmother once bought me a box of crayons here. They were beautiful crayons. They came from Paris. There's nothing like that in the town now.'

Suddenly, almost as if the light coming from the shop —a small shop and small light—had fetched it, Hervey saw the meaning of her mother's life. She has never admired anyone, Hervey thought, except her mother; she has been ashamed of doing things her mother would have mocked or disapproved; her life has been the life of the girl who flew out of the shop, leaving her present on the counter.

Mrs. Russell walked more easily when they were under the wall in St. Mary's Terrace. She was smiling.

'I *like* these cold dry nights,' she said. 'Last night I could hear the bells practising in the old church as clear as if I were climbing the steps. You could really think the air was glass.'

When they went into the house she warmed her hands at the fire, rubbing together her thickened fingers with their blue veins.

'I remember when I was a girl I used to practise in the music room for an hour before breakfast, and my mother stood beside me clapping her hands loudly to mark the beat. In winter my fingers were frozen and I struck the wrong notes. It annoyed her and she used to say, *"I'm* not cold: why are you cold?" One day she took off a fur jacket she was wearing and put it on me and stood there without one. I remember it—the lining was warm and smelled of the scent she bought in Paris.'

She went over to the piano. It was never used now, unless Carlin strummed a piece or two. She sat down and began to play the March of the Priests from *Athalie*. She

knew it so well. She could hear each note striking in her head as clearly as hammers on iron, but her fingers fumbled it. Pressing her foot on the pedal, she tried to drown the mistakes. It was no use. Reluctant to give up she began to play, humming, a trumpery little song called *The Tin Soldier*. The thin gay notes flew out, she nodded her head and her lips formed the words. She made mistakes. It was a ghost playing; it was an old woman. Suddenly she was tired. 'Nay, I've forgotten,' she said, and got up and went back to the fire.

When the shops opened after Christmas she went out to do the errands, and as she was passing Merton's, the antique dealer's, she stopped to look in. She always did. Sometimes she priced things, but he was very dear.

Today he had in his window a charming small mahogany case filled with old coins. It was lined with velvet and had a glass top. The instant her eyes fell on it she thought, It's exactly the thing for Jake's medals.

She stood and looked at it. At the back of the shop she could see Merton, his thin rat face and yellow hands. People said he was one of the sharpest men in Danesacre—no doubt he would ask a fortune for it, knowing, as he would know, that she had never seen one anywhere else. She went away.

The next day she came back again—and the next. The fourth day she could not hold out any longer. I can ask, she thought; if it's as much as I fear it is I can come out.

She pointed. 'What are you asking for that case, Mr. Merton?'

Merton looked at her, scarcely troubling to lift his eyelids. 'Well, it's not really for sale, Mrs. Russell. It's George the First, you know, I bought it to display coins and miniatures.'

'Oh,' Mrs. Russell said. Her heart sank. 'I thought—it would be nice for some medals I have.'

'Well,' Merton said slowly, 'you can have it if you would like it.'

She nerved herself to say, 'But how much is it?'

'Would five shillings be too much?'

Mrs. Russell was almost too shocked to speak. The room, and the man's narrow face with the two protruding teeth, receded and wavered. 'It's worth more than that,' she said at last.

'You can have it for that.'

'Well, thank you very much,' Mrs. Russell said.

Neither of them had mentioned Jake, but certainly he knew whose medals they were. Unwilling to leave it for him to send—what if he changed his mind?—she took it away with her. She was filled with a supreme joy. She did not remember walking home. Her body didn't exist.

By good luck Hervey was in the house. She heard her mother's voice strong and full in the doorway, excited.

'Hervey. Are you there? Come and *see* what I've got. Look, it's the most beautiful thing. It's for Jake's medals. Look at it. It's worth I don't know what and I got it for —what do you think?—for five shillings.'

Chapter 32

In October next year Russell's yearly pension was cut from three to two hundred pounds. He brought the letter from the offices of Poulton Dent into the sitting-room and laid it in front of his wife with a nervous, 'Look at that, will you?' He stood fidgeting beside her while she read.

Mrs. Russell laid the letter down and said drily,

'He writes about sacrifices to be made by all. I should like to know how much the man who signs that letter is sacrificing.'

'I dare say he's doing something,' Russell said. He was humiliated by the letter. He felt that his long service with the Star Line should have set him apart in the eyes even of the directors.

'You were too ready to leave,' Mrs. Russell said. 'Retiring as you did, with only their word for it they would pay you a pension.'

You bungle everything, her voice said. He was stung.

'Ha, they've paid it, haven't they? I dare say that fellow what's his name is making sacrifices as it says, but if Arnold had still been running the firm if there hadn't been this amalgamation as they call it I should have been all right, but it doesn't matter, I suppose they'll alter it again later they'll make it right I shall be all right—'

Mrs. Russell listened to his nonsense with contempt.

'Oh, if you think it's all right to lose a third of your income,' she said sharply.

Russell picked up his letter and padded out of the room. He walked like a bear walking on two legs, softly, heavily, quickly. Listening as she might, Mrs. Russell couldn't tell whether he had gone upstairs or into the breakfast-room.

He led a queer life in the house, never coming into the sitting-rooms except as a visitor. He lived in his bedroom at the top of the house, ate and sometimes sat in the breakfast-room. There were days when he spoke to no one. Mrs. Russell might pass him on the stairs and say, 'Oh, good morning, Will.' He would mumble a 'Good morning' and hurry past.

No one knew what went on in his mind. Would he himself know, if it were pulled out suddenly like a dog from a burrow it ran into? This burrow was tortuous; he must have lost himself very often in blind passages, thinking thoughts as distorted as waves in a sea mist. He was an obdurate liar. But did he know when he was lying? In long silences, he told himself tales in which truth and lies were inextricably mixed, memory aiding and abetting. Say he remembered a street in Rangoon. What easier than to imagine something happening there, and he the centre of it?

And he would lie to defend himself. With the pieces of a broken cup still in his hand he would say, 'I never touched it.'

Life appeared to him with astonishing vividness, but he was never certain where things belonged, so that he would take a house from its courtyard in Alicante and set it down in London and himself in it, carrying on a fantastic conversation with the King's surgeon or an admiral whose photograph he had seen in the newspaper.

He believed his lies. If he had not, he would not have

told them so easily. He talked to people in the town, boasting of these things.

Mrs. Russell said, 'He can't help lying.' She despised him for it just the same. She could not endure his lies, or forgive them.

He went on talking when nobody wanted to listen to him. He felt there was not enough time left in which he would be able to say anything at all. And there was a good deal he could have said—if he had known how to say it. For more than sixty years he had been about the seas. There were more harbours in his mind than feathers on a gull, and he remembered each of them clearly. Set him ashore in the dark on some wharf he had visited once as a young man and he could have walked without stumbling the shortest way to the agent's office.

Hearing a gull scream on a clear day, his ear recovered for him the cry of men selling in the street hot with eastern smells. Shuffling feet, whispers, a door opening in the blank wall. Sails as dazzling, more dazzling than feathers, in the bright, the huge sunlight round them. Faces, voices, cities, the changes in cities.

Mrs. Russell complained that he talked to strangers but never in the house. Yet if he talked, her impatience and contempt got the better of her and like as not she snubbed him.

He had been out on the moors one day—he took long walks alone—and she was in the hall when he came in.

'Well, did you get any heather?' she said to him.

'No, it's not out, only the bell heather.' He thought she was scoffing at him, and added, 'Things are late coming out this year, but the bloom and foilage is better and the air beautiful.'

'You mean foliage.'

'No, I mean foilage,' he said, vexed at being corrected.

Mrs. Russell laughed, not kindly. 'There isn't such a word.'

'I tell you there is,' he shouted. 'It's an old word. I've often heard people use it.'

'Then you've heard queer people,' she said.

He rushed into the breakfast-room, slamming the door. Hervey was in there, standing in the French window. She pretended not to have heard.

'Look at that enormous starling,' she said. 'It snatches the food I put out for the small birds, as fast as I drive it away it comes back.'

Russell frowned. 'I've been watching that bird,' he exclaimed. 'It's a very well-behaved bird. It's not a starling at all. It's an overgrown sparrow. I dare say it's the grandfather of them. It only eats a lot because it needs it.'

He had brought a number of empty logbooks from the ship. He wrote in them in the evenings. What? When he was not writing in them he kept the books in his bedroom, into which no one ever went except the woman to clean.

Now and then he wrote something on a half-sheet of paper and left it lying about for his wife to read. If Hervey came on one of these notes she destroyed it. She found one this evening, in the hall.

'I bought 8 stamps but they disappeared and a new tie on a Monday. I am told that I have put them somewhere and forgot, perhaps so but my memory has not found them yet in 4 weeks, fortunately I have 4 new ties in hand.'

She pushed it in her pocket to take away. She went into the kitchen. It was in the kitchen he wrote, after the woman had gone, turning the red cotton cloth back from the table and spreading out his books, with an old pen.

For a wonder, he had left the logbook unguarded when he went upstairs. The kitchen was cold, every door standing open, and a mist of tobacco smoke. This was his room and the hour for smoking. The open page of the logbook was covered closely in his clear backhand. Although she knew she would not hear him if he came back suddenly, Hervey leaned over it and began to read.

July 31. Today the sun shines in long intervals, the air sweet. Temp. 72° in the shade.

I am very pleased to see Capt Pollock at home for its lonely at times in a show house. I think I should like his house for there is a garden to work in, I may not know much of gardening but I am fond of it, my idea if I should be left by myself is to get a smaller house and a garden clear of the town and then I think I should write a book on people I have never met but would like to meet. When on the moors dream I am happy the busy world is far away my thoughts would scarcely exchange for the finest Jewel.

The Weather decent this year on the whole, little rain and that at night, but good sunshine. On Wednesday I went to Hansyke quarries, and I had a glorious free day and then I walked 5 miles and then rain came so I had to turn back I had a good day and a nice walk.

In all my years of travel I did not know that there were postage stamps for 2/6 5/– 10/– 15/– 20/– until two days ago. Revenue stamps I knew go up to any amount so at the age of 82 I am still learning.

I feel very fit to stand any Weather but its tame doing nothing and I wish I had never left my ship I was happy there but I dont worry for I am use'd to be by myself and lonely so the change over does not worry me in the least.

Hervey stopped reading. Can he have filled books with this, this dust? she thought. She was considerably dismayed.

How could a life filled with seas, temples, the mountains of Chile, rivers, strange cities, end in this stony rubbish?

Another, much shabbier book, its mottled back faded by old suns, was lying there. She looked in it. It was a scrapbook of newspaper cuttings—jokes, poems, the account of a cyclone, the opening of a bridge in Sydney, old fashion-plates. The first cutting on the first page was from an American newspaper, June 10, 1869.

She moved away from the table. The baize door opened noiselessly and Russell came in. He was in stocking feet. The toes of both socks were exquisitely darned. Like most sailors he did his own mending better than any woman. His grey hair, thick, strong, stood out, matted, from his head. He did not look his eighty-two years, his skin a reddish brown, cracked like old wood. He was shabby and rather dirty; he rarely bathed.

'Ha, what are you doing here?' he said genially. He had a mild liking for Hervey. She, since she was indifferent and in some sense alive to him, found it easy to seem friendly. Carlin detested him: she had disliked him even when she was a baby; she would frown and turn from him if he came near her.

Should I say, I was reading your diary? No. She put down the newspaper she was holding, and said,

'Do you want to see today's paper?'

'Oh, I don't give myself any trouble with them. You can't believe a word.' He peered down at the page and said, 'America has got their gold, I see. We shouldn't pay any more, for the money borrowed never left U.S. The shells they sent across fifty percent were duds, as well as other things, the ships they built would barely float, in fact after the War a hundred and thirty ships were burned and not one ever went to sea. Some that the French and

Italians bought got across, but the cost of repairs was so much to keep them running they were broken up, some of them are wrecks on the beach.'

He spread the paper over his logbook and leaned back to bring the words in focus—he was long-sighted.

'Ha, these Americans. They tried for years to make New York the money centre instead of London, and they were certain of it when the War ended, but they've lost and we haven't had to go on our knees begging.'

'Why don't you keep these doors shut?' Hervey said. 'There's a frightful draught.'

Russell laughed shortly. 'I don't feel the cold,' he boasted. He was pleased. 'Those rooms where your mother sits are far too hot. However, I'm not wanted there. But don't repeat it to your mother or Carlin, it would cause more trouble. The sooner that one leaves for good the better I shall like it. Carlin, I mean.'

He pushed the paper aside and began to write. Plainly he wanted to be left. He put his left arm round the book, shielding it. Whatever he wrote was for himself, fetched out by the impulse forcing a child to fill its hands with stones, earth, grass. Hervey went out and left him, dipping his pen in the bottle of cheap ink, his hand the texture of the kitchen table, moving slowly, without pauses, across the page.

Chapter 33

A young German girl who was tramping through England called on Hervey. Mrs. Russell was in her house at the time. She looked closely at the tall yellow-haired Prussian and said in a strange voice,

'I'm glad you are in England, we must forgive and forget the past.'

Hervey made a sudden movement to cover up these words: they seemed to her exaggerated and out of place. Surely—thirteen years after the War—a young German could be treated as an ordinary guest?

But for Mrs. Russell her words were a deliberate gesture. She had lifted them with a great effort and laid them in front of the girl. Who scarcely noticed them.

Only to see clearly, to reach at all, the German, she had had to step past the figure, clearly seen, the hands clenched, the eyes clouded and remote, of her dead son.

Hervey took her a copy of her new book. Mrs. Russell looked at it and said in a warm voice,

'I hope it will be a great success, my little dear.'

There was always a faint doubt in her mind about Hervey's writing. She was proud of her—and a little afraid she would get into trouble. It was as though she were watching a sword dance: it was exciting and brilliant, but if she stumbled? The things Carlin did lay easier in her mind.

'I had a letter from Carlin,' she said, dropping the book on her knee.

'What does she say?' Hervey asked. She made her voice eager.

'Oh, she seems to be doing *very* well. She likes her work. She's been to the theatre. She sent me a clipping of the material for her new dress. Look.'

'Pretty,' Hervey said. It was a strip of grey silk. She held it against the light. 'You would look well in it.'

'It's time I had a new dress,' Mrs. Russell said.

Her voice altered; it became the voice no one had heard for years, many years, half of her life, the cheeky voice of a little girl. Now that she had remembered it again, her daughter would hear it often. 'It *is*, isn't it?'

'Yes, it is,' Hervey said. Easy, simple, to go with her mother on this road. Then why, why, did she feel herself stumbling?

'I wish you weren't going to move back to London,' Mrs. Russell said. 'I shall miss you terribly, terribly.'

Her daughter hardened her heart against an old pain; it turned her, a woman of thirty-seven, to a child.

'We must go, for Nicholas's work,' she pleaded.

'Yes. I know,' Mrs. Russell said. She sat silent for a minute. A curious sense of emptiness and unreality possessed her. She felt afraid, helpless, as though she were standing on the edge of a cliff at night, the dark bitter sea below. If she put her hand out for help it would find—nothing. With an effort, she kept back the words, Don't leave me.

Her mind felt blindly for safety. It remembered something she was thinking about that morning in bed. The Maltese scarf. I never wear it, she thought; I could give it to Hervey to wear in London. She hesitated. Must I begin stripping myself? she thought.

She got up, and moved slowly, feeling her body heavy in its clothes, to the small chest of drawers, and took out the length of soft yellowed lace. The blue tissue paper fell from it.

'Would you like this?' she said to Hervey.

'It's beautiful,' Hervey said. She knew she would not wear it—who wore Maltese lace now?—but she must seem delighted. She touched it carefully. 'But can you spare it?'

'Yes, I never wear it.'

'Oh, thank you very, very much.'

'I bought it—I can't remember, oh, how many years ago. I went so many voyages. It was before you were born.' She saw without seeing a young woman run across a strip of deck: there was sunlight, dark grey-green water like oil. A hail of light on the deck. 'I remember old Mr. Arnold coming on board, it was the *North Star,* I think, he saw me, and he said to your father, 'It seems your daughter's lost her tongue.' Your father was rare and vexed with him, he didn't like it at all.'

'Did you enjoy the voyages?'

'I didn't care for the ship. And the long weeks at sea, often a bad time of the year, and no fresh milk or fruit, and quite often maggots in the food towards the middle of the voyage, and your father hating fresh air, keeping the ports closed and smoking his vile cigars. What I liked was going ashore.'

She stopped. Her face softened. 'I liked going to Antwerp,' she said simply. 'I shall never see it again now."

'I'll take you there next May,' Hervey said.

'I'm too old and tired.'

'You're not. We can travel comfortably.'

Mrs. Russell smiled. 'We'll see,' she said.

For a moment she had thought, So I shall see Antwerp

again. But knew at once that this body she carried with her everywhere would never cross the Place Verte, never see yellow houses facing the quay of the emigrants, and spying-mirrors fixed to walls. Gone, all gone, gone.

She and Hervey were having tea in her front bedroom—she had turned the drawing-room into a second bedroom for herself. By a look on her face, she drew Hervey to notice what she was doing—taking the largest piece of a cake cut in four. It was a joke between them—'I *ought* to have the best piece,' she murmured—but, too, she really wanted that piece.

After tea, the wind being in the right quarter for it, they heard very clearly the bells of the old church on the east cliff. It was the weekly practice. Mrs. Russell listened with vivid happiness: she saw distinctly the little fur cape and red silk gloves she wore on winter Sundays as a child; the gloves pulled over her freshly-cut finger-nails made her wince; she twisted the ends of the gloves into points.

'Happy days,' she said aloud.

'Which?'

'When I was young.'

The air of cold mornings blew into the room. She seemed to be in a place misty and solid, dark and light. Rooms she had forgotten opened from it; a curtain lifted; the shells from a glass jar poured into her lap.

The bells stopped. It was dark outside now; the men must have taken lights with them. In the silence a clock struck somewhere in the town.

'It always strikes after the bells,' Mrs. Russell said. 'I don't like it. Don't you hear? One of the notes is different from the rest.'

'I didn't notice,' Hervey said.

'It is. It's rather frightening.'

'But you're not frightened,' Hervey said quickly.

Mrs. Russell did not answer. She looked into the fire, her mind empty again of thoughts. The little fear had gone, but she felt sad. Why must I be old? she thought. Where has my life gone?

'In those days I thought I could do anything—anything,' she said suddenly.

Hervey did not answer. Again the thought of her mother's many disappointments, of her life turned back and stunted of its growth, tortured her. She could not bear it. Her own life seemed turned to ash in her.

'I've always wanted beautiful things,' Mrs. Russell said. 'I wanted perfection. All my life that's what I've wanted. I should have liked a house with a garden and a great many trees. I love trees.'

'I must get one and you can live in it,' Hervey said. She did not hope to get it.

Towards midnight that night the wind strengthened to a gale. Mrs. Russell was not sleeping well. She lay awake listening to invisible cataracts of wind pouring through the tree under her window. Her thoughts poured this way and that, a spirit she had not learned to control. Nor would now learn.

I didn't say enough about her book. Tomorrow when she comes. I'm enjoying it very much, it's a fine book, my love. This child has a remarkable head. In Antwerp that time we saw the soldiers, and they marched, marched, the sun running like water in the gutters, and the clarions the drums. How many places I've seen and can't recall them.

The captain's wife went ashore the morning the ship docked. If she had visited the town before she knew which streets had the best shops, and where there was a café she could sit in alone. Perhaps there was no such café: in

Buenos Aires a woman could not walk in the streets without her husband. Even when Will was with her men stared and remarked on her. If it were a town new to her she must find the right streets for herself. And the cathedral; or some old church. To step from the burning sun, from the beggars on the step, into that cold. The captain's wife shivered a little, smiled, stared. And in Norway the wild strawberries. In Alicante beggars without limbs. In Trinidad the woman carrying fruit—no, that was Port of Spain.

My life used to be all voyages, she thought. Now my voyage lasts an hour—from house to shops, bridge, harbour, cliff-top. The young woman stepping ashore in Vera Cruz is gone, and here an old woman goes about the streets of a little port.

I knew a lot of people. The captains' wives coming on board in Stavanger. Mrs. Syalikov the agent's wife in Odessa, who remembered how it rained in London.

She saw Arnold: she saw most distinctly his extraordinarily vivid eyes. He was able, she thought, to seem deeply moved. Surely it was a trick?

A long, long time since I heard. When? Five years; it must be five years. That year he sent her his usual birthday letter and a gift. She remembered the letter; it reminded her that during the War he had wanted to give her shares in Poulton Dent; he was immensely rich now, he had sold out at the top of the market; this year he was going into a steel firm, and he made another offer. '. . . Before we're both too old I want to do something for you that will last. Let me put these shares in your name' . . . I answered, declining, and he hasn't written to me since. Why? But it doesn't matter. I feel nothing.

How they're spoiling the town, she thought, vexed and

dry. She had walked on the pier that day and seen that a dignified old house was being turned into a vulgar café. The people who run this town are not fit to live in it. The gaiety, simplicity, modesty of the past came close to her for an instant. A gust of wind crashed some object on the tiles of the path under the window. She knew what it was. She had set a fuchsia out there in the morning and forgotten to bring it in; it would be lying, broken, in a heap of earth and shards.

When Jake was a little boy how he loved fuchsias, she thought.

Where the living memory of her son had been were raw stumps: it was no longer anguish; a dull ache persisted. She stared dry-eyed in the darkness. He came from this body, she thought; and now where? What good did it do?

She felt that the walls of the house shuddered in another gust.

Sleep, I should like to sleep now, she thought. I wonder how many of my pillowcases Catherine took before I knew she was taking. And what else she took? She's not much use now, either; she's deathly slow. I ought to make a change.

Nay, I can't bother with it.

A few days after this Catherine Holler left of herself. While in the last ten years Mrs. Russell was becoming an old woman Catherine had stood still, so that once again she was the younger by ten years. But she was now so short-sighted she left dust in the corners. And her increasing bulk and its oddness made her movements slower and slower.

'Now the boy's earning he wants me at home, 'm.'

Mrs. Russell stared. 'Well, if you feel like that, Catherine.'

Beneath relief she felt a now familiar panic. Am I to be left quite alone? She controlled herself and said calmly,

'You've been with me a long time.'

'If you're left without help any time, Mrs. Russell, I can always come for a few days.'

'Yes, well, thank you. I'm sure you deserve a rest.'

'Goodbye, 'm.'

'Goodbye, Catherine.'

She soon found a middle-aged woman to do her work, well-meaning and docile. She bored Mrs. Russell, who bullied her and depended on her.

Chapter 34

The doctor, a young man, she had called in when her heart became troublesome, drew up a time-table for her of rest and exercise. She thanked him and did nothing with it. She had grown heavy, and she sat with her feet on the couch for most of the day—in fact, all day except the hour when she went to the shops.

The year Carlin married she roused herself to go to London for the wedding. Carlin was marrying a young biologist, with a future and a small salary. Mrs. Russell promised her an allowance of two hundred and fifty a year to make the marriage possible.

She told Hervey this, and told her,

'It means I shan't save anything more. If I die first'—she meant before Russell—'your father will be badly off, but I can't help that.' She made a bitter face. 'It was a fine trick of your grandmother, leaving me the money for my life only. She could just as well have given it to me outright—then I should have had something to leave Carlin. I can leave her what I've saved up till now. That's all, though.'

She smiled slyly and mischievously. 'I'm not telling your father how I've left it.'

She stayed in London with Hervey for a fortnight. It was June. The second day they were to go to Kew, because she had been once, twenty years ago. The morning

was fine and cool, but when Hervey brought her breakfast to her in bed, she said gently,

'I don't think I'll go to Kew, Hervey.'

'Why not?'

'I'm really too tired.'

Hervey was stunned. She had refused to see that her mother was much frailer: to hear her admit it, shamelessly and openly, struck her as treachery, neither more nor less. It angered her. She hid her anger and said cheerfully,

'Very well, then, we'll go to Hyde Park this morning. Would you like to?'

'Is it far?' Mrs. Russell said, in the voice of a child who expects to be disgraced.

'We can take a taxi.'

Mrs. Russell looked happy in the taxi. Hervey had the hood folded back, so that she could imagine herself in an open carriage. The bustling sunlit streets, and a few soldierly rags of music flying from a street band, delighted her. 'Why, I know that tune,' she said, humming it eagerly.

The taxi drove slowly round Kensington Gardens and the Park. 'Aren't we going to get out?' she said at last.

'Stop near the bandstand,' Hervey said.

Sitting, with the pleased smile on her face, she felt at peace except for a nagging tooth of memory. She had been in Hyde Park so many times, each time she came to London with the ship, that no day should have ousted the others. In this green aery vault, between the trees and the prancing horses, more than one self of hers was at home. But here, almost at this place, something disturbing had happened. Her mind stopped, stumbling over a step in the dark, remembering, turning aside, forgetting. She sighed, and relaxed into a comfortable ease.

'Where would you like to lunch?' Hervey said.

'I don't mind, m' old dear. Where you like.'

But Hervey knew she would dislike the food in an ordinary restaurant. And wanted, too, as always, to give her some out-of-the-way pleasure. They walked to the gates. She summoned another taxi and said, 'To the Carlton.' Be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, she thought ruefully.

But when they were seated at their table Mrs. Russell said,

'I wish we had gone home for lunch.'

Hervey hid her disappointment. 'Why?'

'There are too many people.' She glanced at the menu and added, 'And too many dishes. You must choose for me, but choose something simple.'

She enjoyed the first mouthfuls of her *suprême de volaille,* then said, 'It's very good, but I don't want any more.'

Her blue clouded eyes looked with no sharp interest at the room. 'There's another place, isn't there?'

'Here?' Hervey said. 'There's the grill-room—downstairs.'

'No, no, I mean another restaurant—fashionable—I can't remember the name.'

'There are several—do you mean Boulestin's?' Hervey said at a venture.

'No-o.'

'Let me think . . . perhaps the Berkeley?'

'Yes, I think that was it.' . . .

She had waited for this visit to choose her birthday present in London. Hervey had promised her one of the short fur coats that were fashionable this year. She had talked of wanting one. They went to a shop in Regent Street. The first coats the woman showed them were moderately priced: but they were not coats for Mrs. Russell to wear. Fitted to the body, with exaggerated collars, they

were meant for young elegant women. She showed drily her disappointment.

'I know the coat you want,' the woman said.

She went away and came back with a short loose coat, the fur soft and very fine. She put it on Mrs. Russell and stood back, smiling. 'That's the very coat for you, madam. We made it ourselves, in our workroom.'

'It's quite nice,' Mrs. Russell said. She stared at herself in the long mirror. Not seeing the face, the fold of flesh under the jaw, the lips bluish, the lines scored into the thin skin.

'It's a beautiful coat. It suits you,' Hervey said.

'How much is it?' Mrs. Russell asked in an arrogant voice. She had no idea how her voice sounded when she spoke to one of these London saleswomen who did not know her.

'Thirty-nine guineas, madam.'

'Oh, but it's very expensive,' she said.

'But it's what you want,' Hervey said quickly. 'You look beautiful in it. You must have it.'

The saleswoman withdrew tactfully. Mrs. Russell stared again into the glass, her hand holding the collar against her throat, shapeless. Sharp familiar anxiety possessed Hervey. She was afraid to disappoint her mother. Nothing mattered, not the fact that thirty-nine guineas was more than she could afford, if she could only see her pleased, contented.

'It's far too much,' Mrs. Russell said.

'No, it's what I expected. Do have it.'

The woman came back, smiling a question. 'We'll have this one,' Hervey said. She could not keep the exultation out of her voice.

When they were walking away, slowly, Mrs. Russell still lamented the cost of it.

'But you promised me you would live to ninety,' Hervey said. 'So you'll get twenty-four years' wear out of it.'

'I'll try,' Mrs. Russell said in a sardonic voice.

Chapter 35

Two years after this, in June, when she should have come to London again, she wrote to Hervey that she couldn't face the journey. Hervey went up to Danesacre instead. She did not see any change in her mother. 'Why wouldn't you come to London?' she asked, half impatient.

After a moment Mrs. Russell said, 'I don't feel strong enough.'

These were the only words she could find for the feeling of uncertainty that possessed her when she must think of going on a journey. She who had made so many. It was very strange. She did not know why she feared the few hours in the train, or why leaving her own house seemed a monstrous, an alarming effort. She felt that she was being asked to lift something she could not lift. Afraid, stubborn, she refused to try.

She watched Hervey drinking her tea. 'Why do you always get so dirty in the train?' she said.

'Do I?' Hervey said.

'Yes. Look at your face.'

The mortified look of a child came over her daughter's face—face of a woman of forty. Mrs. Russell chuckled. She had been waiting with impatience to tell Hervey about something that had happened earlier in the day.

'Your father had a letter from the firm today. It came on the second post. I took it in and laid it on the window-sill in the hall, when he came in he snatched it and hur-

ried away upstairs with it, and when he came down his face was thunder. He didn't say anything. If I ask him, he'll tell me some lie or other.'

She was excited. This letter had filled her mind during the day; she knew she would not sleep unless she could know what it said. She wanted Hervey to go into Russell's bedroom and look for it.

'If you wait until he's shut in the kitchen with his pipe and his competitions—he does competitions in the papers the whole time now, he's given up writing—he won't disturb himself, and you could read the letter and tell me.'

Hervey prepared to do what her mother wanted, not willingly, but without dreaming of showing reluctance. Mrs. Russell stood on the first landing; she was chuckling. She is like a child playing a trick on another, Hervey thought.

The letter was laid in the first drawer she opened. She read hurriedly. The directors were sorry, they regretted, uncontrollable economic circumstances, a second cut in the pension. From two hundred to a hundred pounds a year.

Mrs. Russell heard the news with apparent calm. Actually, she was shocked and angry. It was not only the loss of the money; it was something almost resentment for the firm's shabby meanness to Russell. He served them well, she said to herself. But she was angry with him, too, as though it were his fault.

'I dare say they think he's lived too long,' she said. 'Eighty-seven. They didn't expect to have to go on paying. Well—I shan't give Carlin any less. She needs her money.'

During the night she awoke with a shudder and lay bewildered for a moment. She thought someone had

spoken to her, but when she listened, gripping the sheet, she could hear nothing, nothing in the room, in the house. She was alone, her body lying inert in the bed. With an effort she lifted her hand and held it against the watery square of the window.

She and Hervey went over to Scarborough for the day. The journey there was pleasant; she looked eagerly out at known landmarks. At the deep valleys. The yellow gorse in ragged cliff fields. The wide bay. Inshore the waves were shaped like thorns. And each thorn impaled a drop of silver.

In Scarborough they walked slowly and happily to the café on the top floor of Mrs. Russell's favoured shop for their cup of coffee. They passed Mr. Porsen standing among his furs. Mrs. Russell was wearing her short fur coat. Vexed, she said to Hervey,

'I oughtn't to have let him see this coat.'

'Why not?'

'He'll think I ought to have bought it from him.'

'Oh, never mind,' Hervey said.

But Mrs. Russell was very sorry. She recovered; and on the furniture floor she spent a long time trying the merits of two armchairs. The man who attended her had known her for years; he knew as well as she did that she would buy neither chair, but he played the game through decently. Then they had lunch. But already Mrs. Russell was tired. She could not eat the salad she had ordered. After the meal they went slowly, so slowly, to the south cliff. When she was sitting in the gardens she thought, Where have I laid my life, between this hedge and that walk lined by the rose trees?

'I meant to buy shoes,' she said.

Years of walking in this street, by that corner, pausing

at this shop, at this point where a seat looks over the bay, on this bridge over the valley level with the tops of trees and rooks flying. They fell away, in flakes falling off like light from a wave.

'We can go back now and get them,' Hervey said.

'No, I'm too tired.'

She saw her own hand reaching up to pull a branch of catkins from a bush. A field sloped to the wood, and a child pulled wild orchises in the wet grass. She looked at Hervey's hands folded in her lap, the fingers long and uncared-for. They searched in the wet grass, she thought. I was a young woman; I had a different body. Not this.

'We'll take the earlier train back,' she said.

When they reached Danesacre she was too tired to walk home. There were no cabs at the station and Hervey telephoned to the garage. Mrs. Russell waited. She was glad to see Craig driving it. With his impersonal familiar carefulness he helped her into the taxi. Home now, she thought, thankful, craving. But she did not think, I shall never go to Scarborough again.

Chapter 36

Hervey went back to London. At the end of July she had a letter from Russell. 'Your mother has had a bad turn, the doctor comes here twice a day and nurses and the rest of it, if she read fewer books she would be in better health in my opinion, but you had better come.'

During the journey she tried to think only of her mother, but in spite of fear her mind persisted in going back to the book she was writing. I must get on, I must finish, we need the money, she thought. This interruption was ill-timed. I must get on.

The nurse met her in the hall. 'How is she?' Hervey said, in a dry voice. If she could help it she would not show feeling.

'A little better, Mrs. Vane.'

'I suppose she had a stroke? Does she know?'

'Well, of course we haven't told her. But sometimes they know.'

Mrs. Russell was lying on her side. When she saw her, Hervey's throat hardened against her shocked breath. The slack discoloured face, the soft hair screwed into a plait, the eyes closed. She went close to the bed.

Mrs. Russell opened her eyes.

'Oh, how nice to see you,' she said in a slow mumbling voice. No one had ever heard her speak in such a voice.

'I'm so glad you're feeling better,' Hervey said. Some nerve in her body was being slowly torn. Yet she would not believe what she saw.

Mrs. Russell did not speak.

'Am I?' she said at last. Puzzled. Like a child.

Hervey helped the nurse to lift her. She hung inert across their arms: somewhere in this shapeless body a restless headstrong young woman had been caught. The quick-moving feet, the hands too restless to keep still, the breasts: caught.

When the night-nurse came Hervey went away to her own room. She came back to say good night. In the same voice Mrs. Russell said,

'Stay. You'd better stay.'

'I am staying,' Hervey said gently. 'It's time to sleep now.'

'Sleep here.'

'I shall be in the next room.'

'Sleep here. Oh, do sleep here.'

Hervey stood, not even thinking. She wanted to cover her ears. When she was in her own room she still refused to think. She'll get better, she said stolidly to herself. This isn't anything, it won't last.

In the morning when she went in Mrs. Russell said, 'Why didn't you come earlier? It's too late now.'

'It's only eight o'clock,' Hervey said.

'No, no, it's late.'

Time was playing strange tricks with her. As she lay there, she seemed to be stepping into the narrow cabin of the *North Star*: the door was not flush with the deck, she had to step over half a foot of boarding. The cabin was empty. She kneeled in front of the chest built on to the wall of the chart-room and began to pull her clothes out of the drawers. She was doing it because she was bored. Outside the sea stretched, a gleaming oily tossing desert between horizon and horizon. She could walk a few yards

this way and a few that. It was too cold to sit on deck; the fresh searching wind pierced coats and rug and made her bones ache. She turned out clothes, gloves, scraps of lace, folding and refolding. Hours passed. She looked up at her clock in its leather travelling case: surely it must be time to go down to the saloon, time for dinner: and she wondered whether the steward had made bread—I simply can't, she thought impatiently, eat that dry stuff any longer.

She opened her eyes. 'What is there for my dinner?'

'You had chicken-broth and a junket,' Hervey answered. 'Don't you remember?'

'That was yesterday, I haven't had my dinner today.'

'You'll have a cup of tea soon, my love.'

They're trying to starve me, she thought sorrowfully. She thought long and greedily of the things she would like; her body craved for food, her mind, too, since only food broke the monotony of these interminable grey days, isolated on a ship.

The days passed. She became slowly stronger. She was able to sit up in bed. She amused herself, half in malice, by annoying the nurse. She tricked her, too. One afternoon the woman had gone out, and Hervey made the tea. The nurse came in when it had been cleared away and Mrs. Russell was alone for a few minutes. A cunning thought came into her mind. Looking at the nurse she said sadly,

'I haven't had my tea yet, nurse.'

'There,' the nurse said, vexed. 'And Mrs. Vane said she would get it.' She hurried downstairs and come back with the tray.

'Sponge cakes, bread and honey,' Mrs. Russell said, laughing. 'That's good.'

She made another excellent meal. When her crime was discovered, she could scarcely keep in her laughter; she felt bruised and swollen with it, but she put on a cunning sober face and said innocently,

'No, I didn't have any tea. Nobody gave me my tea.'

If the nurse vexed her she turned away her face and lay in offended silence, refusing to answer questions—'like a child,' the woman said.

But no one who had known her when she was a child was here, to say how nearly, how strangely, the tricks, the wilfulness, the gestures of the child were escaping from her helpless body.

In a week or two she was able to sit in the window of her room. She could scarcely walk—the nurse and Hervey between them coaxed and edged her the few steps from the bed to her chair—and a demon of restlessness entered into her. She could not endure to sit there watching other people come briskly round the corner and walk away down the hill. It seemed to her she was being cheated. She thought out and tried, one after another, ways of getting the better of her gaolers. She would say in an offhand voice,

'We'll go out now.'

'You'll be able to go in a day or two,' Hervey answered. 'As soon as the doctor says you can go we'll drive into the country.'

So that was no use. Next day, when she saw Hervey getting ready to go out, she tried pleading.

'Let me go with you, Hervey. Oh, do let me go with you.'

Hervey clenched her hands; she felt she could not bear more of this: yet of course she would bear it. There is *nothing* one cannot bear.

'We'll go soon,' she said, as she would speak to a child.

And the next morning again, her mother's slow voice, feeling over the words, yet anxious, hopeful.

'I must get my shoes on now.'

'Tomorrow. Tomorrow we'll go in the car, and I'll ask for Craig to drive us.'

But when, after a few more days, they did go out, she was soon tired, and wanted to turn home. Sitting, stiffly, half afraid, in the hired car, she looked out at the road she knew well, the hedges, the trees; and scarcely saw them. They were less real to her than those she had in herself and knew in dreams, in the short nights, alone—the nurse sat now in the next room—the tiny flame of the night-light in her eyes when she lifted her eyelids; and then again the images of the past, the wall, old, covered with moss, near her first house, the spiders' webs like a fine lichen spread over the dry gorse, the moor path, sunlight, the gas-lit shop, the bustling darkness of the narrow street and the light from shop-windows and excitement and greetings on the worn pavement.

Sometimes as she sat, in the window of her room, she would move her hands as though she were at the piano, or were kneading bread. Moment by moment, she yielded up her life in these gestures. When she stood up docilely to be undressed, her arms hung as loosely as a child's and her eyes sought the fire. The courage with which she had lived was needed now for such small actions as crossing the room or facing an opened door. With a new modesty she tried to live this exacting life.

Even when she was stronger she was not yet at home in time. If she fell asleep she awoke bewildered, not knowing which end of the day it was. And sometimes she thought Hervey was Carlin, and asked her to find Hervey.

She talked to Hervey about times when she had been happy.

'Do you remember the house of the Béguines at Bruges? It was built round a green courtyard, wasn't it, and there were trees and water. I should like to have lived there.'

Her eyes, staring and distant, were now Mary Hervey's.

At times the bitterness of the past filled her. She could not endure Russell now. Once a day, in the morning, he came into her room and stood awkwardly by the bed. He was not at ease with her.

'Well, how are you feeling?' he asked her.

She would not lift her head to look at him. 'Better,' she answered, indifferent to him, scarcely moving her lips.

He was at a loss. With a forced heartiness he said,

'You'll soon be down then?'

She didn't trouble to answer him, and after waiting a moment he escaped, bolting from the room like a scared animal.

'He only comes to see what he can see,' Mrs. Russell said to Hervey bitterly.

She would watch him hurrying up the road with his quick shuffling stride. Her mouth set in lines of contempt, and awful bitterness. She was past being hurt by him now, but she could not endure him. It was not what he had done to her—not even what he did to Jake—it was himself she hated and could not forgive. She didn't ask, Why did I marry him? But—Why didn't he die years and years ago?

One evening Russell called Hervey into the breakfast-room. The room was in darkness. She was startled by his voice coming out of the darkness when she was passing the open door. She peered in and could not see him.

'Shall I turn the light on?' she said.

'No, don't. I don't want it,' he answered.

She felt her way across the room and sat in a chair at the table. Now she could see him dimly, sitting on the couch. She could not see his face, only his body in the angle of the couch and his hands hanging.

'There's something I want to tell you,' he said, slowly. When he lowered it his voice was easy and pleasant. 'I haven't told anyone. I didn't tell your mother, I thought it would worry her, but they cut th' pension again—to two pounds a week. Well, it's less than two pounds. See? I've been drawing money since then, from th' two hundred I have in the bank—to give her th' same money for th' house. Now all this expense—nurses—I don't know—'

Hervey did not know what to say. She realised, suddenly, how humiliated he was by this second cut. It was an insult. It made light of his sixty-one years at sea, of his skill and reliability as captain, of the honour he had thought he had with the firm. He would never say this openly, he was too self-deceiving. But it was not his wife, it was himself he spared by holding his tongue so long.

'I shall be able to help,' she said at last.

'Oh, that's all right,' Russell said vaguely. 'I only wanted someone to know.' He paused. His voice, going on slowly in the darkness, was naked and unguarded. 'She's always done as she likes. There was that furniture of m' mother's. I dare say it wasn't worth much, but she could have asked me. And then buying other furniture and saying, Well, that's mine. And Mrs. Hervey's money—I never saw a penny of that money. I didn't want it—not I—but she shared all I made. She always said, If I'm left any money it'll come in for our old age. Well, if it does, I shall be surprised. Then in Odessa that time, she wanted to buy a dress. Well, you can buy better dresses in England, cheaper —these foreign materials, they're no good. There was a

man said to me in Boston, he said, We Americans we can't make the cloth you can. I laughed at him. Well, we've been making it for five hundred years, I said to him. Ha, you can't teach us anything about cloth. . . . I spent sixty years at sea—it was snowing when I saw my first ship—I was thirteen. She always would have her own way, always. And then grumbled if things didn't go as she expected. Well, I've lived long enough not to expect anything.'

He gave his short nervous laugh—like a man throwing his arm up to protect himself.

'Are you going to tell mother about the pension?' Hervey asked quietly.

'Eh?' He sounded startled. 'No. I'll see, later.'

'Why sit here in the dark?'

'Ha, I don't mind it, I can see well enough at night.'

Hervey got up and went away. She could not sit there, listening to him, any longer. I might sit all night, she thought, coldly. That she understood her father did not make her like him any better.

Mrs. Russell was getting better slowly. She could walk—in a slow hesitant way, as though she were afraid. She seemed withdrawn, like a woman peering from the middle of her room into the street. When Hervey talked to her she always had the feeling that she must be careful; she must say nothing that would shock this half-averted creature. She chose simple words—so simple they were often lies. And many of them fell uselessly, unanswered, into the indifference, the silence, behind her mother's eyes and her thoughts.

Once Hervey was talking about Carlin's house and the garden. That had always pleased Mrs. Russell. Suddenly she said,

'I shan't see it again.'

'Why, of course you will,' Hervey said lightly. 'You'll soon be well enough to come down.'

'No.' Mrs. Russell seemed to speak to herself. 'I shall not be well.'

'You'll be as well as ever,' Hervey said. 'You've had a bad heart attack, but if you're careful you won't have any more.'

There followed a long silence. Mrs. Russell looked away, her eyes empty, remote.

'I don't remember the heart attack,' she said, slowly.

Hervey shuddered. It was agony to think that she was betraying her mother. And perhaps Mrs. Russell was not deceived. Perhaps she knew, or suspected.

'I shan't see Sandy grow up,' Mrs. Russell murmured.

Sandy was Carlin's baby, whom she had seen once.

'None of us, except Carlin, will see him grow up,' Hervey said. She did not know what to say. Her heart seemed dead in her.

It was a relief when Mrs. Russell was stubborn, when she refused to do things the doctor and nurse wanted her to do. When they had left the room, baffled, she looked delightedly at Hervey, and said in the voice Hervey alone heard now, the little girl's railing voice,

'I shan't. They can say what they like, but I shan't.'

One evening, as they sat together in her room, she said, very slowly, as though at last she were bringing out something she had been hiding,

'Sometimes, in the night, I feel afraid.'

Hervey strove with her bitter, agonised grief. She must speak in a calm easy voice.

'Why should you be afraid?'

'I don't know—but I am afraid,' Mrs. Russell said quietly.

'You could say to yourself—*in quietness and in confidence shall be my strength,*' Hervey said. She held herself still, not daring to think, to feel. She *would* not let her mother's fear come to her. It was too much. She wished for her mother to die, to free her from this suspense of her own life. And yet she loved her more than anything in the world. She waited with tightly folded lips, as though the water had risen to her chin, as though she would drown in it if she moved. And so she felt nothing. She shut away from herself the knowledge of what was taking place in her mother. She would not, not, know it. She won't die, she won't, she repeated.

And since her mother was not going to die why agonise over it?

Speak calmly, lightly—as if to a child. And close, close your ears.

When Mrs. Russell was really well, able to walk to the town, though not alone, Hervey began to think of going home. She could not write in this house, and write she must. She was very short of money, in debt, and it would be worse if she did not finish a book soon. She wrote slowly, with effort. No sooner was a book finished than she must begin another: she always hoped that the new book would be easy. It never was, and she could not help spending her money before she had earned it. There were obligations, there were presents, and beyond all, there was her son; she could refuse him nothing.

She spoke to the young doctor, asking him if she could safely leave her mother.

'Well, yes, you could,' he said, slowly, as if doubtful.

'But will she be all right now?'

'Why—yes. That is, she might have another stroke. But

perhaps not for several years. If she is taken care of, there is no reason why she shouldn't live safely for years.'

'Oh,' Hervey said, 'I see.'

She heard only the comforting sense of what he said. She passed the other over, deliberately, like a coward.

Mrs. Russell did not want her to go. 'I shall be dull without you,' she said plaintively.

'I'll come back as soon as I can—very soon."

'I shall be alone. And alone at night.'

'The nurse is going to sleep in my room,' Hervey said. 'And you like her.'

Mrs. Russell did not answer. She turned her face away.

Hervey had to leave in the morning before breakfast to catch her train. She went in to say goodbye. Mrs. Russell was lying sunk down, her eyes closed. She seemed scarcely to hear what Hervey said.

'Don't go,' she mumbled.

'I must go,' Hervey said. 'I'll come back.'

Mrs. Russell seemed to lose interest in her. She did not speak again. It was as though, at this moment, she relinquished her hold. As though she knew she was alone now, that her daughter had failed her.

In the autumn she watched the leaves turn, and thought of the woods where she used to walk with her children. Sometimes in sleep she walked there again, and the leaves lying in her path were of pure gold. Gathering them in her hands she laughed, glad that in spite of a fear she had had she was still young, her cheeks smooth, her body quick and light.

The days shortened to winter, to a mild winter, with high winds and no frost. Christmas came. There was the tray, but her presents only pleased her for a short time, then she dropped them from her hands and her mind. She had

grown deathly tired. She would beg to go to bed, she the active, the restless. An extreme lassitude had risen, like a flood rising in her, and drowned her energy, her hard will.

The sea smooths out all the marks on the sand made by men and the webbed feet of gulls and the marks of wheels.

The kindest thing would have been to let her live in her own time, sleeping and waking as she pleased. But she had to live by the time of others, and long before evening she was tired, she wanted to sleep. She could not understand why she must sit up in her chair, looking at the fire, which was no longer her fire, her hearthrug—as she would have said in the past, 'I must make up *my* fire,' and 'Be careful of *my* rug.' Nothing was hers except this ache.

One February evening the nurse tried to distract her with some flowers Carlin had sent.

'Look at the snowdrops, Mrs. Russell. Aren't they cool and pretty?'

'Yes, very pretty,' Mrs. Russell said. She looked at them, then turned her head away. She was too hungry for sleep to think of anything else.

'You know, your daughter Carlin sent them to you.'

After a moment she said, 'Who is Carlin?'

Why bother me? she thought.

When she was in bed, the new ease of her body comforted her. She seemed to sink into whiteness and warmth. She closed her eyes. She heard a woman's skirts rustling close to her ear, and scarcely lifting her eyes she saw the figure of a woman in the doorway, in the darkness outside the tiny circle of the night-lamp; she was going away: the door closed. Ah, she thought, I'm alone. She was not afraid; the thought that her mother, who had just left her, was close at hand, supported her. Sleep, she thought, I shall sleep well. And so she did. She was aware of light coming

into the room between green, blue and rose coloured curtains, of a wallpaper covered with bunches of roses, of a piano and a woman seated at it. The room, and the wallpaper, quivered and murmured with light like a swarm of bees, and the woman at the piano, who was her mother and yet in some natural and inexplicable way herself, was singing, but she could not hear the words: like unseen bees, they floated past her. She was happy; she had never been happier. A sense of joy was in the air itself of the room.

It faded, and the room, and the woman, grew dim. She felt that she was sinking. She awoke. Fear seized her in the same moment. Then, slowly, she remembered where she was. This room, with its one window, looked, beyond the small garden and the slope of rank grass, to the harbour stretching its grey slippery water between the mooring posts to the old wall of the shipyard, gulls asleep on the posts, and the road behind the yard rising to the fields rough with reeds and gorse and to the moor. Listening, she heard the leaves of the pear-tree nailed to the wall of the house, the wall of the room.

It was dark in the room. She knew it was early morning only by an inner certainty. And then she knew there was something she had to do. It was an urgent task of some sort. Or it was a journey. Whatever it was, she must be about it. The feeling of urgency seized her body and with it the fear that she would be late. She got out of bed, feeling her body heavy, and stood for less than a moment. Then the walls broke apart, the tree raised before her eyes a network of veins. The darkness, torrents of dark water, overtook her.

When the nurse came in at six o'clock she alone could not lift her on to the bed. She covered her up quickly, then fetched the woman. They lifted her into bed, and the

nurse sent the woman for the doctor and got hot water bottles. When the woman came back she said to her, 'Well, you can go an' wire for Mrs. Vane, it's the end.'

'Oh, I hope not,' the woman said.

'Well, you may hope,' said the nurse.

Hervey arrived in the early evening, after dark. She went to her mother's room. Mrs. Russell was reared up on pillows. Her face was quite blank, with a terrible emptiness, a skull, not a face, with blue open eyes and the cheeks sunk. All her life she had been growing less like her father's family and more like her mother. It was now her mother who lay in the bed.

'She's gone a long way on her journey,' the nurse said.

Her firm loud voice did not shock Hervey, since she could not think this was her mother, or that her mother was dying. It was not real to her yet. She went to bed as usual, and slept. The new night-nurse was a very young woman, softer and gentler than the other.

In the morning she went into the room. The older nurse came, looked at Mrs. Russell, and said again,

'She's going fast on her journey.'

Hervey bent over her mother and said, in a low voice, 'How are you, my love?'

Mrs. Russell's eyes turned slowly to her voice.

Like the eyes of an infant, but slowly, and without that swimming life behind them.

She gave little cries and moans.

If she is conscious she will suffer, Hervey thought. She was full of horror. When the young doctor came she said to him, 'Yesterday she was unconscious, but this morning she heard me speak. You must give her some morphia.'

'It isn't necessary,' he said, 'but if you like I'll give it.'

After the morphia Mrs. Russell lay quietly again. A handkerchief was lying at the base of her throat. It fluttered rapidly and continually, lifted by the beating of her heart.

Whenever she could be alone with her mother Hervey bent close to her and said, 'Don't be afraid, my love, I'm here.' She felt as though a nerve were being drawn out of her slowly, minute by minute. Her tears fell against her hard will to keep them back. 'Don't be afraid, I'm here, your Hozzhie is here.' Forgotten for years, she remembered the old name, and repeated it, thinking her mother must hear it and know she was not left. The mother made no sign.

'You and I have been on so many journeys, and now you must go alone.'

She was ashamed of her tears, afraid that she was crying for herself. When the nurse came in she hurried away.

That day passed, and the night, and another day. At the end of the day, when the older nurse was going off duty, she said, 'You must call me if you want me.'

'I don't think we'll want you,' Hervey said civilly.

'She'll soon go to her home. *I* know. I've seen too many,' the nurse said kindly.

Hervey did not believe her. But when the other had gone she sent the younger nurse out of the room and began to empty every drawer in which there might be things her mother would not want her husband to touch. There was the box full of Jake's letters. She began destroying these, then stopped. Nay, they can live with me, she thought. She took the photographs of Jake, the young boy with heavy childish face, in his apprentice's uniform, the boy in the uniform of the Flying Corps, the young officer, still a

boy in everything but his eyes. And she took the parchment *au nom du Président de la République,* awarding him his *Médaille Militaire.*

She came on an enlarged photograph of Jake and herself as children, touched up in colours. It was a dreadful object; the colours crude, and Jake had the smile of an idiot; she herself only looked sulky and stupid. This she tore up. She remembered as she was tearing it that it used to stand on Russell's desk on the ship. He or her mother must have brought it home or it would have been sunk with his other possessions by the Germans.

She tore up scores of letters from herself. There were bills, paper fans, programmes of concerts in London, Barcelona, Antwerp, New York, Montevideo, Trinidad, shells, feather flowers. The fragments of her mother's life, a few papers and feathers, lay on the floor of her room, and she careless in the bed, breathing, but not caring what was destroyed and what kept.

A clock struck somewhere in the town. Hervey listened in sudden terror. She looked up at her mother. Yes, there it came—the different stroke. Mrs. Russell's face did not change. How many captain's wives in this town of sailors had noticed it, listened for it for a few years, and then one night not heard it?

Lying at the bottom of a drawer she saw a flat olive-green notebook. The right hand pages were covered in her mother's fine strong writing. It was an account book, very old. She tried to see the young woman who bent over it, but it was no use.

Her breath was cut off in her throat by anguish. 'Oh, my love, my love,' she whispered. She forced back the tears. I mustn't begin to cry, she thought, despising herself.

She gathered up Jake's letters and the notebook and the other things, and went away with them to her room.

She lay down on her bed. If she sat up it would mean she agreed with the nurse that her mother was dying. Towards one o'clock the young nurse came in.

'You'd better come now, Mrs. Vane.'

She went in. Mrs. Russell died quickly. The tide of death ran over her face quickly: and that was all.

Hervey was dazed. But for the pain in her stomach—but that was ghastly—she did not feel anything. The pain—as the nerves fastening her to her mother were ripped away. They did not all come away now. Some of them never would die while she lived; they would remain in that cold earth of the past.

The young nurse had run out for the other. Hervey kissed her mother's warm, dead cheek. 'Goodbye, my love, my love, goodbye,' she whispered. Still she did not know anything but the torn feeling in the pit of her stomach. But the tears ran over her face, and fell on to the bed.

When the older nurse came, Hervey sent her up to tell Russell. She was up there a minute or two. When she came down she said in her rich sensible voice,

'I told him it was too cold to get up. He's staying there. I tucked him up. Now you go and lie down, Mrs. Vane, we don't want you.'

When she saw her mother again it was daytime. I don't like what those women have done to her, she thought. Her lips never turned up like that, never. But then neither were they colourless and her face yellow, small, icy cold. White and soft, her hair was drawn back from her forehead, and it was white.

Cry, if I cry, Hervey thought, I am only crying for myself. Not for her. I am crying to have her back, and because

although she was tired, she would rather have been alive.

After breakfast she came on her father, wearing the dirty suit green with age he insisted on wearing in the mornings before he went out. He was standing crying in the hall. She went up to him, and he pushed her away and turned his back. He was snuffling and drying his face with his hand. He cheered up later and went out to be shaved in the town. Before he went he asked Hervey if she had seen the cheque-book of the joint account. She gave it to him and he took it away to his room. He would have a fine time going through the counterfoils.

When he came back from the town, shaved, he bustled in to Hervey with a paper bag. 'Here's something for you,' he said. She looked in the bag. It was a grapefruit. He always bought grapefruit at Christmas, one for each person in the house. He must think this is a day to be marked, Hervey thought drily. The nurse had taken on all the business of the death and he had nothing to occupy him except the same things.

He had bought his weekly competition paper. During the afternoon he came smiling into the sitting-room to ask Hervey, 'What would you say was a man of letters in four letters?'

She suggested a poet.

'Ha, that's it,' he said, laughing. He shambled quickly out.

A very young reporter with a face like a hen came from the Danesacre newspaper. He sat with a notebook in his claws and wrote slowly.

'Ah, yes, a Memorial Service,' he repeated. He looked up. 'And does that precede the interment?'

'It does,' Hervey said.

'And was the deceased a native of Danesacre?'

Hervey stared at him. She wanted to say, Don't you know that her mother was one of the Hansykes and there were Hansykes owning land near Danesacre in the ninth century, and don't you know that *her* mother was a Garton of Garton's shipyard? But what was the use? The past is gone. What Danesacre was when it was alive is forgotten. Let be.

'Yes.'

She stood up, and showed him out of the house.

She kept going into the room to speak to her mother. The icy cold of her mother's cheek against her lips shocked her. But she could not let her lie there alone. Each time she came in to her it was though as another piece of her own life were being ripped out. The cold room, tidied of all the things her mother had used every day, seemed a poor place for her.

'I'm sorry you have to lie here alone,' she said.

The agony came again, and she forced her tears back and went out of the room. No one must see that she cried.

The men came with the coffin in the evening. As soon as Russell heard them at the door he came into the sitting-room. He was shivering with cold. He stood in the middle of the room and said,

'I'll go out. I'll go out at the back.'

'Why go out?' Hervey said. 'You'd better stay here. Sit down.'

He never came into this room when the mother was alive. He sat in one of the armchairs and began talking about a pain in his chest. 'I shan't last long,' he said.

His daughter despised him for trying to get attention and sympathy. The men were walking about in the room overhead. She knelt on the hearthrug and poked the fire.

'Are you warmer?'

'Oh, I'm warm enough,' Russell said jauntily. 'I don't believe in sitting in warm rooms. Her rooms were always too warm for me. . . . I've been forty-eight hours on the bridge in bad weather, and without a hot drink. That's nothing, that's nothing.' He stood up and walked across the room to stare at two Chinese paintings hung there.

'Beautiful things, those,' he said.

'They are beautiful,' Hervey said.

'Ha, yes. I don't remember where I got them, but I remember the old chap in the shop, he was a sinner, he put the price up as soon as he saw I liked them. Oh, no, you don't, you old wretch, I said to him, I'll pay you so much and not a cent more. He handed them to me without another word. You have to treat them in that way. All these Labour Party men, they're foolish, they think it's all right to talk of natives as if they were like other people, but they aren't, it only leads to trouble.'

Each step the men took in the room above Hervey heard by some other channel than her ear.

'Man offered me a lot of money for those pictures,' Russell laughed. 'They're valuable, he said. I said, I know they are. He knew something about pictures, he had a shop on Fifth Avenue. Used to come down to the ship to yarn to me. . . .'

At ten that night Hervey went into the kitchen. Russell was turning the pages of his scrapbook, and weeping.

'Look,' he said, 'look what I've found.'

Hervey leaned gingerly over his shoulder. He pointed his finger, like a grey piece of old wood, at a yellowed cutting from an Australian paper. His finger rested on the lines,

Then home, get her home, where the drunken rollers comb,
And the shouting seas drive by,
And the engines stamp and ring, and the wet bows reel and swing,
And the Southern Cross rides high!
Yes, the old lost stars wheel back, dear lass,
That blaze in the velvet blue. . . .

'All them voyages,' Russell said.

Hervey went away. She was sorry for him for a minute, but she did not care about him.

Captain Russell sat on in the kitchen. She may think she knows everything about her mother, he thought, but she doesn't know them streets in Santos, and Santiago, and Dieppe and there. So many voyages, ports, and foreign lands, were jumbled in his mind, crammed there like the stuff in his scrapbook, like junk in an old shop. For a last time Sylvia Russell walked lightly and quickly through foreign streets that no longer exist in the shape she knew them by; she stepped on to the quay, turned the corner, and was gone.

Russell went up to bed, hurrying past her closed door. Hervey had been listening behind her own door for him to be gone to his room. She went in to say good night to her mother.

'How cold you are, my love,' she said, 'how cold.'

She touched her hands, her cheek.

'Good night, my love, good night, good night. Don't think of anything, the journey's over. Oh, my love, my love.'

I can't let her go, she thought. Bitter grief hardened her throat, and scalded her eyelids.

The next day when she went in she saw that the faintest colour had come into her mother's cheeks. She was

changed. She seemed younger and softer. She looked wiser, too, as though in the night she had just passed she had learned some new thing. This image of her, this tranquil, inconceivably tranquil face, obliterated, at least for the time, the tormented skull of the last few days, and obliterated the image of the last few years, the blue fixed stare, the face shapeless because the mind had lost interest in moulding it; and yet a face to be remembered.

Hervey tried with hard effort to recall the other images of her. They must, each in its turn, have been as familiar to her as this—the young tireless woman, the woman touched by time but still eager to live, the mother of a fine son. But nothing would come except an image stolen from photographs.

And now this smiling tranquil dead woman threatened to put out of memory the last living image of her. Hervey refused it. Turning away, she saw, suddenly and piercingly, her mother turning her head from the glass in the sitting-room; she was trying on a new hat and looking at herself so intently that she seemed to be trying to draw some image out of the glass into herself. Anxious and yet still absent, she said, 'Do you think it suits me?'

An excitement, brief and profound, seized Hervey. It is useless to try to drag out of my memory all those images obliterated by time. But if I think about things that happened, about *events,* the image of her will come of itself. I shall slip past the other memories without disturbing them and see her clearly taking a dress from its place, sitting watching the sea within easy hearing of the orchestra, climbing the lane between the hedges.

For a moment it seemed a great deal. Then it seemed nothing. She looked again at her mother's face. She touched it. The skin was still so soft.

Russell was standing on the stairs outside the room. He had a small photograph in his hand. He showed it to Hervey.

'Look, it's exactly as she is in there.' He jerked his head towards her door.

It had been taken by a photographer in Fontainebleau during the first week of their marriage. It was the photograph of a sulky girl, childishly immature, the image of Jake.

'I've been looking about everywhere for that large coloured photograph of you children,' Russell said. 'It's gone.' He shambled off, saying over his shoulder, 'It doesn't matter, as he's gone and you're going.'

In the afternoon Catherine Holler called with a bunch of spring flowers. She stood in the hall crying. They were not easy tears, Catherine was not sentimental, her roots were too old in Danesacre clay and salt mud for that. Her long service, her long intimacy, and the quarrels, were ruptured by this death. For a few days she felt broken.

That was Mrs. Russell's last day in her house. Hervey went in and out of the room, and spoke to her. The delicately flushed cheeks, the smooth rounded forehead, the smiling mouth, the rigid body, dreamed their own dream, indifferent to the living. She was changed utterly.

Hervey stood in the dark there. To say she was alone is nothing. We are all alone. But to be alone with the heart out of your body is a different thing.

'This is your last night with us. Forgive me for all I have thought against you, forgive me for all I have not done for you. Remember me only as the child I was, wholly in your hands.'

She felt her own life running out of her, leaving her drained dry.

Clara came up for the funeral, but would not go to it, nor to the Memorial Service. There were many captains' wives at the service, come out of respect and some friendship for Mrs. Russell. They knew better than her daughter what memories she had kept in her mind. Some of them knew foreign ports and cities as she knew them, before the streets were altered and old buildings pulled down, and when all these captains' wives die the old streets, the old buildings, the old wharves, will be gone, not seen again.

It poured with rain during the Service, and on the long drive afterwards. They took her through the oldest part of the town. Looking across the harbour from her first house she would get glimpses of this street between its houses with their feet in harbour mud. The sun came out when they were burying her and shone on the clay and the naked shrubs. From up here one looks down on the view she loved best in the world, the harbour, the houses swarming against the side of the cliff, the quiet fields at the top of the cliff and the church, the landmark for sailors and men crossing the moor. On the drive back Hervey looked at the sunlight lying across the harbour. She was not yet used to the thought that her mother would not see this again. All these things she had delighted in were still here, and she was not here.

That evening, by the fire, Clara began suddenly to talk. The colour came into her face; she laughed and shook, holding her hands down to the fire.

'Your mother ought never to have kept up that quarrel. It was a wrong thing to do, to be so stubborn and heartless. I don't say your grandmother wasn't hard, a hard woman, I know she was, she looked at you as if you weren't there, but she would have helped your mother. It wasn't right that everything was done for my children, and nothing for

hers, but whose fault was it? She should have asked. And then your father, she married him to please herself, it was the most foolish thing she could have done, and she punished him for it; when she was a child she would punish other people for what she did to herself, I remember that well, I remember her falling once and breaking the thing she was carrying and running upstairs to find our governess Miss Flora and beating her with her fists, furious, blaming her. Was that what a Christian would have done? And now leaving everything to Carlin. Do you know, my husband was in love with her before we married, and she treated him shamefully, yes, shamefully? No one could do anything with her when she was a child. Oh, she was stubborn, stubborn, a woman who would do as she pleased, no matter what came.'

Hervey was sorry for her, seeing her old thin body shaking. Even her hands were hysterical. The things Clara was saying about her mother angered her, but she had not the hardness to shut her up. She listened and said nothing. With a useless passion she thought, Yes, you can talk like this, but she was a thousand times better than all of us.

She felt that by not speaking she was betraying her mother. I have all her faults, she thought, but I have not her great virtue of speaking her mind. She would never have sat listening in silence while things she disapproved of were said, or said about me.

A day or two passed. Hervey made ready to go away. She did not want to leave Danesacre. It was the one place in the world where she was at home. In all other places, though she enjoyed them, she was less than half herself. Unless she could come back here to live she would live crippled and restless. But she had to go. And she could not have stayed in this house, or with her father.

The day before she was to leave he came to her with a letter of her mother's. It had been written in 1926.

'It wasn't meant for me,' he said. 'It came in with a letter she wrote thanking me for the money I sent her for her birthday. Well, it was the usual letter she always sent me on her birthday, and this was folded up in it. I don't know who she was writing to. Perhaps you know something about it.'

Hervey took the letter. It was short. There was no name. It began by thanking somebody for remembering her, and it went on,

You know that I would not willingly hurt you, but I must decline once more. I expect that what you once called my Yorkshire hardness and narrowness is an integral part of my character and will continue, but if the need arises I will remember your offer. I appreciate your continued kindness.

Faithfully yours,

SYLVIA RUSSELL.

Hervey handed the letter back. She was startled. All these years, she thought, twelve years, he never said one word to her about it.

'I don't know who it could be, I don't understand it,' she said in a dry voice.

'No, I don't understand it,' Russell said. He laughed his habitual nervous laugh. 'There's other things I don't understand. She's left everything to Carlin. I never had a penny of Mrs. Hervey's money. When the boy was killed she kept all his things for herself. And the furniture she sold and bought new, yes, well, they were m' mother's things. Well, it's no use talking about it now.'

He waited for Hervey to speak. She had nothing to say

to him, and he hurried away and shut himself into the breakfast-room with his logbook and his competitions.

Hervey wandered from room to room of the house. Her mother's rooms, in their unnatural tidiness and silence, were unendurable. It was impossible that she was not here, opening the wardrobe, her full white arms bare, leaning to look into the mirror. On the bed in the front room were two old purses she had found in one of the drawers of the desk. One of them, a once handsome thing in dark-red leather with a silver clasp, she remembered well enough. Her mother had carried it for years when they were children. The other, smaller and more worn, was strange to her. The young wife must have carried it, with not much in it. A flame of agony passed through her. Here is all her life, she thought.

She took them into her room, and laid them with the copies of her own books she had given her mother and Jake's photographs, to be packed. To be taken away.

She heard Russell go up to bed, padding quickly, almost noiselessly, in the dark. He turned all the lights off when he went to bed, and hurried along the landing without a word.

Hervey went into the front bedroom. Already that last image of her, smiling and lifeless, had all but vanished. Others came forward; they stepped close for a minute. None of them was young. I shall never see her young unless I dream, Hervey thought.

She was here. In that voice, she said, 'Don't go.'

Her treasures, handkerchiefs in a special box, lace, the bundles of letters.

Hervey turned away blindly and went to her own room. She fell asleep when she was still lying, with clenched hands, mouth shut on its bitterness, across her bed. In the

morning she had to leave early. As the train took her past the harbour, here narrow, she tried to see Danesacre for the last time as her mother's home. The town, the harbour, the abandoned shipyard, the old houses, passed out of sight. Now they were passing fields and the leafless woods she knew. She felt naked, emptied of life, defenceless. It seemed to her that she was being drawn into the void in herself, into that darkness without life, without breath. Help me, she said, help me.

In the early sunlight, in the fields, at the side of the moor stream running under the trees, there was nothing.

She thought of her own son, of her husband.

The train stopped at a country station where often they had got out to start walking. She noticed catkins on a tree close to the line. So I shall go on, she thought. I shall see this spring, and as many springs as I have eyes for: and, after that—I shall *know*.

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